# Port Argent

Colton

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# TIOBA

## By ARTHUR COLTON

*With a Frontispiece by A. B. Frost*

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Mr. Colton here depicts a gallery of very varied Americans. He is already in the front rank of American story-tellers, and these tales add to his reputation. Tioba was a mountain which meant well but was mistaken.

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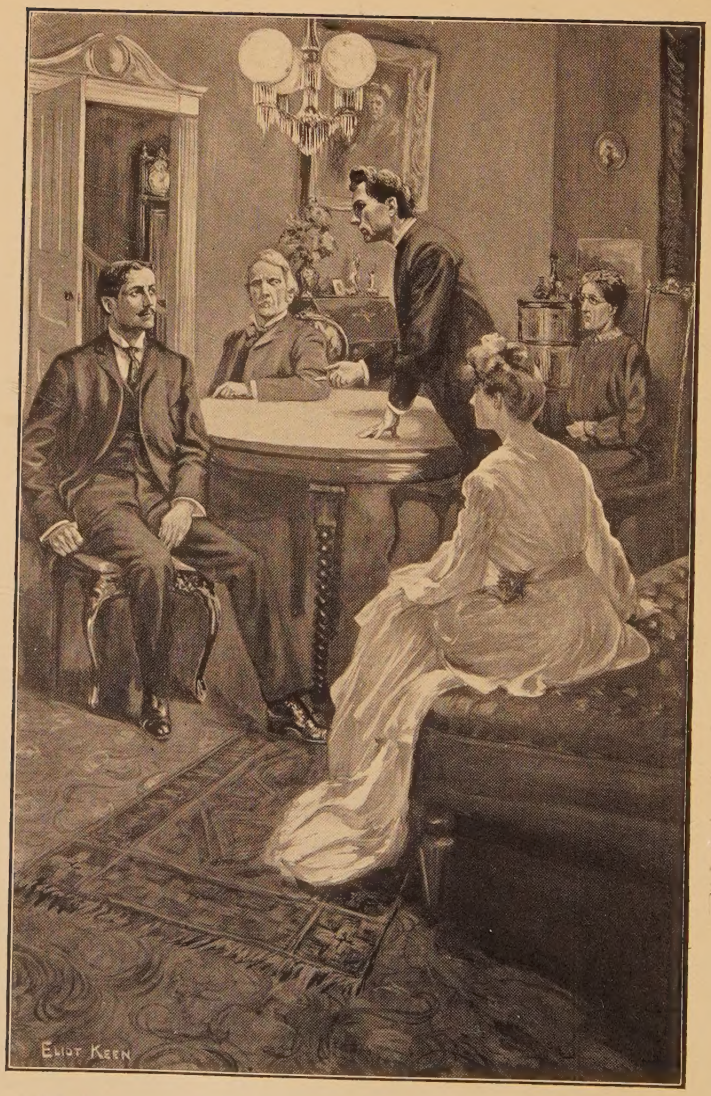


Mr. Champney lifted his brows, appreciating the rhetoric. Camilla's face was flushed with excitement. "How glorious! And now, Dick!"

(Page 33)

# Port Argent

## A Novel

By ARTHUR COLTON

With a Frontispiece by Eliot Keen

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DEDICATED

TO

George B. Colton

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# PORT ARGENT

## CHAPTER I

### Pulses

PORT ARGENT is a city lying by a brown navigable river that gives it a waterway to the trade of the Lakes. No one knows why it grew there, instead of elsewhere on the banks of the Muscadine, with higher land and better convenience. One dim-eyed event leaped on the back of another, and the city grew.

In the Senate Chamber where accidents and natural laws meet in Executive Session or Committee of the Whole, and log-roll bills, there are no "press galleries," nor any that are "open to the public." Inferences have been drawn concerning its submerged politics, stakes laid on its issues, and lobbying attempted. What are its parties, its

sub-committees? Does an administrative providence ever veto its bills, or effectively pardon the transgressors of any statute?

Fifty years ago the Honourable Henry Champney expected that the acres back of his large square house, on Lower Bank Street by the river, would grow in value, and that their growing values would maintain, or help to maintain, his position in the community, and show the over-powers to favour integrity and Whig principles. But the city grew eastward instead into the half-cleared forest, and the sons of small farmers in that direction are now the wealthy citizens. The increment of the small farmers and the decrement of Henry Champney are called by social speculators "unearned," implying that this kind of attempt to lobby a session of accidents and natural laws is, in general, futile.

Still, the acres are mainly built over. The Champney house stands back of a generous

lawn with accurate paths. Trolley cars pass the front edge of the lawn. Beyond the street and the trolleys and sidewalks comes the bluff. Under the bluff is the tumult of the P. and N. freight-yards. But people in Port Argent have forgotten what Whig principles were composed of.

There in his square-cupolaed house, some years ago, lived Henry Champney with his sister, Miss Eunice, and his daughter, Camilla. Camilla was born to him in his middle life, and through her eyes he was beginning, late in his old age, to look curiously at the affairs of a new generation.

Wave after wave these generations follow each other. The forces of Champney's generation were mainly spent, its noisy questions and answers subsiding. It pleased him that he was able to take interest in the breakers that rolled over their retreat. He wondered at the growth of Port Argent.

The growth of Port Argent had the marks of that irregular and corrupt legislation of

destiny. It had not grown like an architect-builded house, according to orderly plans. If some thoughtful observer had come to it once every decade of its seventy years, it might have seemed to his mind not so much a mechanic result of men's labours as something living and personal, a creature with blood flowing daily through arteries and veins (trolley cars being devices to assist the flow), with brains working in a thousand cells, and a heart beating foolish emotions. He would note at one decade how it had thrown bridges across the river, steeples and elevator-buildings into the air, with sudden throbs of energy; had gathered a bundle of railroads and a row of factories under one arm, and was imitating speech through a half-articulate daily press; at another decade, it would seem to have slept; at another, it had run asphalt pavements out into the country, after whose enticing the houses had not followed, and along its busiest streets were hollow, weed-grown lots. On the whole,

Port Argent would seem masculine rather than feminine, reckless, knowing not form or order, given to growing pains, boyish notions, ungainly gestures, changes of energy and sloth, high hope and sudden moodiness.

The thoughtful observer of decades, seeing these signs of eccentric character, would feel curious to understand it from within, to enter its streets, offices, and homes, to question and listen, to watch the civic heart beat and brain conceive.

One April afternoon, some decades ago, such an observer happened by and found gangs of men tearing up Lower Bank Street.

Lower Bank Street was higher than Bank Street proper, but it was down the river, and in Port Argent people seldom cared whether anything fitted anything else.

Bank Street proper was the main business street beside the river. Fifty years before, in forecasting the future city, one would have

pictured Lower Bank Street as an avenue where wealth and dignity would take its pleasure; so had Henry Champney pictured it at that time; but the improvident foreigner lived along it largely, and possessed Port Argent's one prospect, the brown-flowing river with its ships. Most of the buildings were small houses or tenements. There was one stately line of square old mansions, a block or two long and beginning with the Champney place.

A worn-out, puddle-holding Macadam roadbed had lain in the street since the memory of most men. It had occurred to a railroad to come into the city from the north, peg a station to the river bank, and persuade the city to pave its approaches, and when the observer of decades asked a citizen on the sidewalk: "Why, before this long, grey station and freight-yards here of the Peninsular and Northern Railroad are these piles of paving brick, this sudden bustle on Lower Bank Street?" he was told: "It's a

deal between Marve Wood and the P. and N. He was going to make them come into the Union Station, but they fixed him, I guess."

"Fixed him?"

"Oh, they're a happy family now."

The citizens of Port Argent held singular language.

"Who is Marve Wood?"

"He's—there he is over there."

"Talking to the young man with the note-book and papers?"

"Yes. That's Dick Hennion, engineer and contractor."

"And this Wood—is he an engineer and contractor?"

"No—well, yes. He contracts with himself and engineers the rest of us."

The observer of decades moved on, thoughtfully to observe other phases of the city, its markets, churches, charities, children pouring out of school, its pleasures at theatre, fair-grounds, and Outing Club.

The young man with the notebook stood on the curb, writing in it with a pencil. He was large, lean, sinewy, broad-shouldered, brown-haired, grey-eyed, short-moustached, with features bony and straight. He produced the effect of impassiveness, steadiness, something concentrated and consistent in the midst of the bustle. Workmen slouched and hurried to and fro about him, unnoticed. There was the mingled click of shovel and bar and trowel, thud of rammer, and harsh voices of foremen. The elderly "Marve Wood," stood beside him—thick-set, with a grey beard of the cut once typical throughout the Northern States, which gave to the faces that shape as of a blunt spade, and left the lips clean-shaven. He had a comfortable girth, a straight, thin-lipped mouth, a certain mellow Yankeeism of expression, and wore a straw hat and a black alpaca coat.

Hennion tore a leaf from the notebook, and beckoned the head foreman, a huge, black-moustached Irishman.

"Here, Kennedy, if any of these men ask for jobs to-morrow, set them to work."

The nearer workmen looked curiously toward the paper which Kennedy tucked in his vest pocket. Hennion and Wood turned away to the city. The sidewalk grew more crowded as they came to Upper Bank Street, where the statue of a Civil-War general struck a gallant attitude on a pedestal. He appeared to be facing his country's enemies with determination, but time and weather had given the face a slight touch of disappointment, as if he found no enemies worth while in sight, nothing but the P. and N. station and the workmen tearing up Lower Bank Street.

Henry Champney stood at his tall library window, gazing out, and saw Hennion and Wood go up the street. "Dick must have a hundred men out there," he said.

"Has he?" Camilla looked up from her book.

"Ha! Concentration was the military

principle of Napoleon," Champney went on. "Our energetic friend, Dick, is, in his own way, I should say, Napoleonic in action."

Camilla came to the window and took her father's arm, and stood leaning her head against his large bowed shoulder. She did not seem inclined to concentrate her thoughts on the scene in front of the P. and N. station, or the Napoleonic actions of "Dick," but looked away at the sunlight shimmering in the thin young maple leaves, at the hurrying, glinting river, at the filmy clouds floating in the perfect blue. The lower edges of this perfect sky were a bit stained with the reek of the factory chimneys across the river; and the river, when you came to consider it, was muddy beyond all reason, and thronged with impetuous tugboats. The factory chimneys and tugboats were energetic, too, concentrated and Napoleonic in action. The tugboats had no poise or repose, but the factory chimneys had both. Their fiery energies had solid bases, and the powers within

them did not carry them away. There are men, as well as steam engines, whose energies carry them bodily, and there are others who are equally energetic from a fixed basis, and the difference is important—important to the observer of the signs of the times; possibly even important to Camilla.

Camilla's thoughts had no bearing on factories and tugboats. They were more like the filmy clouds floating in the blue, beyond the stain of the spouting chimneys, and if darkened at all it was probably only as sunny clouds are sometimes darkened mysteriously by the shadows of themselves.

Hennion and Wood entered the swing-door of a business block, mounted a flight of stairs to an office where "Marvin Wood" was gilded on the ground glass of the door. The room was large, and contained a desk and an extraordinary number of comfortable chairs. A typewriter clicked in the next room. They lit cigars and sat down before the open window. The street outside was

full of noises. The windows of the office building opposite were open.

"Those were Freiburger's men, you say?" remarked Hennion.

"Whole batch. It's Freiburger's wanting to get on the Council, and his boys are bothering him already for 'shobs.' Oh—well—he's all right."

"He can get on the City Hall flagstaff and wave himself for a starry banner if he wants to."

Wood chuckled appreciatively at the image of Freiburger in that function.

"But you'd better tell Freiburger," continued Hennion, "that I won't stand any deadheads."

"Shan't tell him a thing, Dick, not a thing."

Wood turned shrewd grey eyes on the young man, and smiled away the shortness of his answer. The eyes were full of humour and liking for the man beside him, and bordered on a network of wrinkles.

"Supposing you feel like firing some of his men, you'd better go and see him," he added.

"All right, I'll do that."

"And take your time, of course," said Wood. "Hang on till you're both satisfied. He's peaceful, only if you scare him to death, he might feel injured."

"Well, I'm glad to oblige him——"

"That's it. Talk to him that way. Fire 'em, of course, but—you'd better make it all right with Freiburger. A man that rides in a cross-country schooner, sometimes he has to join the shoving."

"That's all right."

Hennion smoked in silence a few moments, then took his cigar out and added, "I see."

"I never knew a man that made a living by looking up rows for himself," said Wood, wrinkling his eyes thoughtfully at the coils of smoke, "except one, and that wasn't what you'd call a comfortable living. It was a man named Johnson, in St. Joseph, some-

where about '60. He started in to fight the landlord of the Morton House for his bill, till the landlord was full of knots, and his features painful, and his secretest rheumatism woke up, and his interest in his bill was dead. That was all right, supposing Johnson didn't really have the price. I guess, like enough, he hadn't. But he went round town then making the same arrangement with other folks, a lawyer and a liveryman and others. Sometimes he had to fight, sometimes he didn't, but after a while somebody drew a gun on him, and St. Joseph buried him with a sigh. He never was really comfortable."

Wood wrinkled his eyes, and followed the twists and capers of the smoke with a close interest. Hennion sighted over the points of his shoes at an upper window opposite, where three men were arguing excitedly in what appeared dumb-show.

"Does the parable mean something, particularly St. Joseph's sigh?"

"The parable," said Wood, "particularly St. Joseph's sigh. Yes. It means, if the peaceable man comes out better 'n the warlike, it's because folks get so tired of the warlike."

"Oh!"

"Now, the Preacher, up on Seton Avenue——"

"Aidee?"

"Yes. He's terrible warlike. He says I'm a thief. I say he's a fine man—fine man. He keeps on saying it. I keep on saying it. Folks got kind of tired of him a while ago. He says I'm a disease, now. Well—maybe so. Then I guess this world's got me chronic. Chap comes along with a patent pill, and a new porous plaster, and claims his plaster has the holes arranged in triangles, instead of squares like all previous plasters; he has an air of candid discovery; he says, 'Bless my soul! Your system's out of order.' Sounds interesting once in a while. And then this world gets so

tired of him; says, 'I've had a belly-ache eleven thousand years. I wish to God you wouldn't keep giving it new names.' Well, —a couple of years ago the *Chronicle* was publishing Aidee's speeches on Civic something or other every week. Aidee used to shoot straight but scattering at that time. He'd got too much responsibility for the details of the millennium. Why, when you come right down to it, Dick, Aidee's got as sky-high an opinion of himself as anybody I know. That's natural enough, why, yes. If I could stand up like him, and convert myself into a six-inch pipe of natural gas on the blaze, I'd have the same. Certain, I would. But, there ain't any real democracy in him. He says he'd sit in the gutter with any man. Guess likely he would. I wouldn't. But would he and the other gutter-man hitch. Would they get along together? No, they wouldn't. Aidee's a loose comet that thinks he's the proper conflagration for boiling potatoes. Go on now! He's

too warlike. Him and his Independent Reform and his Assembly — oh, well — he wasn't doing any great harm then. He ain't now, either. I told him one time, like this:

"I says, 'Fire away anyhow that suits you. But,' I says, 'what makes you think you'd like my job?'

"'What is your job?' says he.

"'Don't know as I could describe it,' I says, and I was a little stumped. 'It's not that kind. It's complicated.'

"'No,' he says, 'as you understand and work your job, I shouldn't like it.'

"'No more I shouldn't yours. Speaking of which,' I says, 'what is your job?'

"And he was stumped too. He was, for a fact.

"'I don't know as I could describe it. It's not that kind,' he says.

"'Complicated?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well,' I says, 'I shouldn't want to try it. I'd mean all right, but it wouldn't go.'

I says, 'There was a man died up here at the city jail last year, and Sol Sweeney, the jailor, he was going to call in a clergyman on the case as being in that line. But then Sweeney thinks, "I can talk it. I've heard 'em." Well, Sweeney's got an idea his intellectuals are all right anyhow. Being a jailor, he says, he's got the habit of meditation. So he starts in. "Bill, you've been a bad lot." "Yep." "There ain't no hope for you, Bill." "No," says Bill, "there ain't." "You'll go to that there bad place, Bill." Bill was some bored, but he allowed, "I guess that's right," speaking feeble. "Well, Bill," says Sweeney, "you ought to be thankful you've got a place to go to."'

"Aidee laughed,—he did really,—and after that he looked thoughtful. Fine man, Dick. I sized him up for the things he didn't say. 'Sweeney,' I says, 'he meant all right, and he'd got the general outline of it. But I was going to say, if I tried to run your job for you, thinking anybody could

run it with his intentions, I'd make a gone fool of myself, sure.'

"Now see this, Dick. I did make a gone fool of myself, sure. It wasn't any of my business what he didn't know. He's been acting too reasonable since. That's what I wanted to tell you."

"What for?"

"Oh, well," said Wood balmily, "you might run across him. You might be interested to find out what he's up to."

After a few moments of silence Hennion dropped his feet and stood up.

"All right. I won't row with Freiburger, but I don't see what Aidee's got to do with me," he said, and went out, and up Bank Street, and then turned into Hancock, a street which led back from the river into the residence sections.

## CHAPTER II

### Richard the Second

WHEN Hennion reached his rooms the sunlight was slanting through the maples outside.

He sat down after supper by his windows. The twilight was thickening in the foliage, the sparrows holding noisy caucuses there——

Hennion's father had been a contractor and engineer before him, and before the great war had made the face of the nation more thoughtful with the knowledge of what may happen in well-regulated families.

Once the sun was a pillar of fire and cloud, the land of promise seemed every day attained, and the stars were jubilant. Were ever such broad green plains, strong brown rivers and blue lakes? There was oratory then, and sublime foreheads were

smitten against the stars. Such oratory and such a forehead had Henry Champney, in those days. The subject of oratory was the devotion of the forefathers, the promises and attainments of the nation set forth in thrilling statistics. A thousand audiences shuffled and grinned, and went their way to accomplish the more immediate things which the orators had endeavoured to decorate. The admiration of the orator and the public was mutual. There was a difference in type,—and the submerged industrialist, who worked with odd expedients, who jested with his lips, and toiled terribly with brain and hand, admired the difference.

The elder Hennion did not care about "the destinies of the nation." He dredged the channel of that brown river, the Muscadine, drove the piles that held the docks of Port Argent, and dug the east section of the Interstate Canal. The war came, and someone appointed him to something connected with the transportation of commissary. He

could not escape the habit of seeing that things did what they were supposed to do. Hennion's supplies were apt to reach the Army of the Cumberland regularly and on scheduled time, it would be hard to tell why.

He built the Maple Street Bridge, and the Chickering Valley Railroad. A prairie town was named after him, which might become a stately city, and did not. Someone in the East, speaking technically, "wrecked" the Chickering Valley Railroad for private reasons, rendered the stock of it for the time as waste winter leaves. The elder Hennion died poor and philosophical.

"Never mind, Dick. He [the wrecker], he'd have gone to hell anyhow. That's a cheerful thought. When old Harvey Esterbrook died, he told his boys he hoped they'd have as much fun spending his money as he did making it, but they didn't. They worried it away. They'd 've disappointed him there, only he was dead. It's mighty good luck to be young, and I wish I had your

luck. But I've had a good time." Such was "Rick" Hennion's philosophy.

Young Hennion had been his father's close companion those last seven years, and learned of him the mechanics of engineering and the ways of business, how men talked and what they meant by it. He stepped into the inheritance of a known name and a wide acquaintance. He knew everyone on Bank Street, merchants and lawyers, railroad men up and down the State, agents and promoters, men in grain and lumber, iron and oil, and moreover some thousand or more men who handled pick and shovel, saw and trowel. He recognised faces brown with earth-dust, black with coal, white with the dust of grain. Men of one class offered him contracts, somewhat small at first; men of another class seemed to look to him as naturally for jobs; his life stretched before him a sweep of fertile country. Among the friendliest hands held out to him were Marve Wood's.

Wood came to Port Argent after the War, a man in middle life, but he seemed to have been there before. He seemed to have drifted much about the continent. It was a common type in Port Argent, so many citizens, one found, had drifted in their time. He had a kind of land agency at one time, and an office on Hancock Street, and presently became one of those personages little noted by a public looking to oratory, but certainly members of party committees, sometimes holders of minor offices. Such a man's power, if it grows, has a reason to account for the growth, a process of selecting the man most fitted to perform a function. If one wished to know anything intimate about the city, what was doing, or about to be done, or how the Council would vote, or any one thread in the tangled interests of scores of men, Marve Wood appeared to have this information. His opinion was better — at least better informed — than most opinions. For some reason it was

difficult not to be on good terms with him.

Port Argent concluded one day that it had a "boss." It was suggested in a morning paper, and people talked of it on the street. Port Argent was interested, on the whole pleased. It sounded metropolitan. Someone said, "We're a humming town."

Real estate at auction went a shade higher that morning, as at the announcement of a new hotel or theatre contracted for. The hardware man from the corner of Hancock Street said:

"Wood, I hear you're a boss."

"That's it. Fellow told me so this morning. I threw him out of the window and asked him how to spell it. Been figuring on that ever since."

"Well, I've been reading the New York papers, and they do say down there it ought to be spelled with a brick."

"Well—now—I learned to spell that way, but the teacher used a shingle mostly.

'Marvin Wood, spell buzzard,' says he, and splits his shingle on my head for dropping a 'z.' Yes, sir, that was fifty years ago, and now every time I write a tough word I duck my head to dodge the shingle, and spell it wrong. I don't know. Maybe a brick would 've been better. Want anything in particular?"

The hardware man wanted to know about the new Third-ward schoolhouse, and when and where to put in a bid for supplying it twelve dozen indestructible desks.

The sparrows in the dark maples in front of Hennion's windows were quiet, because the night was come, wherein no sparrow may quarrel. The issues of their commonwealth were settled by being forgotten. Doubtless, many a sparrow would keep the perch he had pre-empted unrighteously, and in the morning the issues be different, and the victims find their neighbours overnight had tired of their wrongs. Even one's

neighbours' sins are not interesting forever, let alone their wrongs.

Hennion dressed and went out, and presently was walking on Lower Bank Street past the broken-up street and the piles of paving brick.

The Champney house was one of those houses that cannot do otherwise than contain four rooms to the floor, each square, high-ceilinged, and furnished more with an eye to the squareness and high ceilings than to the people who might come to live in it, not so angled and elevated. Hennion was not impressionable, but it seemed to him dimly that Camilla ought to sit on a different kind of chair. The house was heavy with the spirit of another generation, as if effectual life in it had stopped short years before. The furniture in the parlour had an air of conscious worth; the curtains hung reminiscently; Webster, Clay, and Quincy Adams occupied gilded frames and showed star-smitten foreheads.

Through the open door across the hall Hennion could see the big white head of Henry Champney in the lamplight, and knew where Miss Eunice sat primly with her knitting and gold-rimmed glasses.

The rush of the day's work was still ringing in his mind, the sense of the flexibleness of men and events, the absence of all form among them, or attitude, or repose. The Champney house with its inmates, except Camilla, seemed to have petrified at its point of greatest dignity.

Camilla said: "You haven't heard a word I've been saying, and it's important!"

Camilla was the second generation to possess the gift of feeling the importance of the immediate occasion. Fair maids are common enough, and yet most of them are extraordinary. But Camilla had the shining eyes, and lift of thick dark hair away from the forehead, that to elderly people recalled Henry Champney of long ago. She had the same intensity and readiness of belief. The

manner in which that man of distinction would wrap small issues in the flag of the Republic, and identify a notion of his own with a principle of the Constitution, used to astonish even the constituency which voted him a giant. She seemed to Hennion not less apart from the street than Henry Champney, Miss Eunice, and their antiquities. She belonged to a set of associations that should not be mixed up with the street. In the street, in the clear light and grey dust, men and ideas were shaped to their uses. But Camilla's presence was to him a kind of vestal college. At least, it was the only presence that ever suggested to his mind things of that nature, symbols and sacred fires, and half-seen visions through drifting smoke.

He was contented now to wait for the revelation.

"Have you lots of influence really?" she said. "Isn't it fine! I want you to see Mr. Aidee. He's coming here to-night."

The revelation was unpleasant. He felt his latent dislike for Aidee grow suddenly direct. When it came to introducing the incongruities of the dusty street and blatant platform to the place where his few silent ideals lay glimmering; bringing Camilla to march in the procession where chants were played on fife and drum, and the Beatitudes painted on the transparencies, so to speak—it was unpleasant.

"I'd rather not see him here."

"But he's coming!"

"All right. I shan't run away."

"And he has asked my father——"

Hennion disliked Aidee to the point of assassination.

"Oh, Camilla!" he broke in, and then laughed. "Did he ask Miss Eunice to come in, too?"

The prospect had its humours—the guilelessness of the solemn preparation to sweep him into the fold with ceremony, with peals of Champney oratory and the calamitous

approval of Miss Eunice. It might turn out a joke, and Camilla might be persuaded to see the joke. She sometimes did; that is, she sometimes hovered over the comprehension of a joke, as a bright, peculiar seraph might hover over some muddy absurdity jogging along the highway of this world, but she had so many other emotions to take care of, they shed such prismatic colours around her, that her humour could not always be depended on.

The door-bell rang, and Aidee came in. Hennion felt nearly benevolent, as he shook hands and towered over him. Aidee was slight, black-haired, black-eyed, smooth-faced, and pale. Miss Eunice entered. She had the air of condemning the monstrous world for its rotundity and reckless orbit. Mr. Champney's white head and sunken shoulders loomed behind her. The five sat about the centre-table. A chandelier glittered overhead.

Hennion felt amused and interested in

the scene. Mr. Champney's big white head was bowed over and his eyes glowed under shaggy brows; Camilla was breathless and bright with interest; Miss Eunice had her gold-rimmed glasses fixed in qualified approval on Aidee, who was not rotund, though his orbit seemed to be growing reckless. He was on his feet, pacing the floor and talking rapidly. It occurred to Hennion that Aidee was a peculiar man, and at that moment making a masterful speech. He swept together at first a number of general ideas which did not interest Hennion, who looked, in fact, at Camilla. Aidee drew nearer in particulars. Hennion felt himself caught in the centre of a narrowing circle of propositions. He ceased to be amused. It was interesting, but disagreeable. He appreciated the skill of the performance, and returned to dislike the performer, who leaned forward now, with his hands on the table.

"Mr. Hennion, you don't belong to that

class of men or that class of ideas. You are doing good work for this city in your profession. You put your right hand to it. We share its benefits. But your left hand is mixed up with something that is not upbuilding, but a sapping of foundations. Here the hopes of our fathers are more than fulfilled, and here they are bitterly disappointed. How do you come to have a share —in both of these results?"

Mr. Champney lifted his brows, appreciating the rhetoric. Camilla's face was flushed with excitement. How glorious! And now, Dick!

Hennion resented the situation. His length and impassiveness helped him, so that he seemed to be holding it easily, but he felt like nothing of that kind. Talking for exhibition, or approval, was a thing his soul abhorred in himself, and observed but curiously in other men. He felt that Camilla expected him to talk with elevation, from the standpoint of a noble sinner now

nobly repentant, some such florid circus performance. He felt drawn in obstinacy to mark out his position with matter-of-fact candour. Aidee's rhetoric only emphasised what seemed to Hennion a kind of unreal, gaudy emotionalism.

"I am not in politics, Mr. Aidee. I meet with it as an incident to business. I sometimes do engineering for the city. I am supposed to have a certain amount in preference on contracts, and to give a certain amount of preference on jobs to workmen your city politicians send, provided they're good workmen. Maybe when they vote they understand themselves to be voting for their jobs. They're partly mistaken. I contract with them to suit my business interests, but I never canvass. Probably the ward leaders do. I suppose there's a point in all this affair. I'd rather come to it, if you don't mind. You want me to do personal wire-pulling, which I never do and don't like, in order to down certain men I am

under obligations to, which doesn't seem honourable, and against my business interests, which doesn't seem reasonable."

"Wire-pulling? No."

"Why, yes. That's what you're doing now, isn't it? You think I'm a wire that pulls a lot of other wires. Of course it's all right, if you like it, or think you have to, but I don't like it, and don't see that I have to."

Aidee hesitated.

"Miss Champney——"

Hennion was sharp and angry in a moment.

"Mr. Aidee, the standards of my class are not supposed to be up to yours——"

"Why not? Class! I have no class!"

"I don't know why not. I don't seem to care just now. But not everyone even of my class would have cared to ask Miss Champney to oblige them this way."

"Why not?"

"Because we have more scruples than we advertise. I beg your pardon."

"The apology seems in place," rumbled Mr. Champney, his voice vibrating thorough bass.

"I offer it to you, too, sir. The situation is forced on me."

"The gentleman doesn't like the situation. I suggest"— Champney heaved his wide frame out of the chair—"that he be released from his situation."

"Do you like the situation, sir?"

"I do not, sir," with rising thunder. "I hope, if this discussion is continued here, or elsewhere,"—appearing to imply a preference for "elsewhere,"—"it will have no reference to my family."

Mr. Champney withdrew royally. Miss Eunice followed, a suspicion of meekness and fright in her manner, her glasses tilted sideways. Aidee stood still a moment. Then he said quietly:

"I have made a mistake. Good-night,"

and took his leave. He looked tired and weighed down.

Hennion felt the air as full of echoes and vibrations subsiding.

Camilla wept with her head on the table.

"I'm sorry, Milly. It was a shocking row."

Camilla felt her soul in too great tumult to consider either humour or repentance.

Going past the piles of brick, on Lower Bank Street, Hennion felt like shoving them all into the Muscadine, and Aidee and Wood after them. He wanted his private life and work, and Camilla. But Camilla hovered away from him, and would not be drawn nearer. She was a puzzling seraph, and the world was a puzzling world, in whose algebra the equations were too apt to have odd zeros and miscellaneous infinities dropped among them to suit the taste of an engineer. It seemed to be constructed not altogether and solely for business men to do business

in, else why such men as Aidee, so irrationally forcible? And why such girls as Camilla to fill a practical man's soul with misty dreams, and draw him whither he would not?

"Wisdom," says the man in the street, "is one of those things which do not come to one who sits down and waits." There was once a persuasion that wisdom would come to nothing else than just such leisure and patient attendance; but the man in the street has made his "hustling" his philosophy, and made the Copernican discovery that the street, and no longer the study, nor yet the hall of legislature, is the centre of the wheeling system. There the main current runs; elsewhere are eddies, backwaters, odd futilities, and these, too, fall into the current eventually and pour on. Life is governed and convinced by the large repetitions of "hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death," and of these the first four make their reports in the street.

Only love and death seem to have their still eccentric orbits, not Copernican, and even the street is content to refer them to seven celestial spheres and a primum mobile, and say no more.

## CHAPTER III

### Camilla

SOMEONE once suggested that Camilla was "a type," and Miss Eunice found comfort in the suggestion. To most of her friends she seemed nothing else than Camilla, a term inclusive and select, meaning something radiant and surprising, valuable for the zest that came with her and lingered after her going. They said that, if she had been born to masculine destinies, she would have been another Henry Champney, a Camillus with

> "The fervent love Camillus bore
> His native land."

In that case she would not have been Camilla. Here speculation paused.

In general they agreed that she walked and talked harmoniously, and was lovely and lovable, with grey eyes and lifted brows,

stature tall and shoulder carried martially, delicate and tender curves of mouth and throat. Camilla was no accumulation of details either.

At any rate, the world is not so old but a sweet-faced maiden still makes it lyrical. It is a fine question whether she is not more exhilarating than ever.

Camilla seemed to herself identified with her ideas, her energetic beliefs and sympathies. The terms in which she made an attempt to interpret herself came forth partly from cloistral studies in that hive of swarming energies, a girls' college in an old New England town, where ran a swift river, much cleaner and swifter than the Muscadine. She barely remembered when the family lived in the national capital, and Henry Champney was a noted and quoted man. She had but a dim mental picture of an invalid mother, fragile, belaced, and beribboned. Her memories ran about Port Argent and the Muscadine, the Eastern

seminary, the household rule of Miss Eunice. They included glimpses of her father's friend, the elder Hennion, a broad-shouldered man, who always had with him the slim youth, Dick; which slim youth was marvellously condescending, and once reconstructed her doll with wires, so that when you pulled a wire it would wave arms and legs in the manner in which Miss Eunice said no well-bred little girl ever waved her arms and legs. He seemed a beneficial person, this Dick. He taught her carpentry and carving. Magical things he used to do with hammer and saw, mallet and chisel, in that big unfurnished room over the mansards of the Champney house, so high up that one saw the Muscadine through the tops of the trees. The room was unchanged even now. It was still Camilla's hermitage. The ranges of trunks were still there, the tool-chest with Dick's old tools, old carvings, drawings, plans of bridges.

He was beneficial, but peculiar. He thought the Maple Street bridge the finest of objects on the earth. He did not care for fairy stories, because they were not true.

Henry Champney kept certain blocks of wood, whereon Camilla at the age of twelve had cut the semblances of faces, semblances of the vaguest, but all hinting at tragedy. Miss Eunice had disapproved of that pursuit.

On the morning after Aidee's visit Miss Eunice sat at the parlour window knitting. Beyond the lawn ran Lower Bank Street; beyond the street and underneath the bluff were the freight-yards, with piles of black coal and brown iron dust, and a travelling crane rattling to and fro, from ship to car. Beyond the yards were the river and the P. and N. railroad bridge; beyond the river the dark chimneys of factories, with long roofs, and black smoke streaming in the sky, and the brick and wood tenements of East Ar-

gent. Beyond these, hidden but influential, because one knew they were there, lay the rank, unsightly suburbs; beyond the suburbs, a flat, prosperous country of fields and woods, farm buildings, highways, and trestle pyramids of the oil wells.

Camilla was reading, with one hand plunged in her hair. The river and factories had lain some hours under the shadow of Miss Eunice's disapproval. She turned the shadow on Camilla, and remonstrated. Camilla came out of her absorption slowly. The remonstrance roused her to reminiscence.

"We used to keep our heads in wet towels at college," she said.

Miss Eunice laid down her knitting. Camilla went on thoughtfully:

"Do you know, Aunty, a wet towel is a good thing?"

Miss Eunice sighed. Camilla lingered over her reminiscences. After a time she picked up the books that lay about her, laid

them on her lap, and began running through the titlepages.

"They're Mr. Aidee's. Listen! 'The Problems of the Poor,' 'The Civic Disease,' 'If Christ Came to Chicago.'"

"Mr. Aidee lent you such books!"

"Yes, but you need a wet towel with them. 'Socialism and Anarchy,' 'The Inner Republic.' Oh! Why! How fine!"

She had slipped beyond the titlepage of a fat grey volume. She was sunk fathoms deep, and soaked in a new impression, nested and covered and lost to conversation. Miss Eunice returned to her knitting, and spread gloom about her in a circle.

It is one of the penalties of stirring times that they open such gulfs between the generations. If the elders have been unplastic, the young have not taken it intimately to themselves that life was as keen to their predecessors as it is to them, that the present is not all the purport of the past. Our fathers did not live merely in order that we

might live, but were worth something to themselves. Miss Eunice had had her heart-beats and flushed cheeks, no matter at this late day when or how. No matter what her romance was. It was a story of few events or peculiarities. She had grown somewhat over-rigid with time. That her melancholy —if melancholy it should be called, a certain dry severity—that it gave most people a slight impression of comedy, was perhaps one of the tragic elements in it. As to that long-past phenomenon of flushed cheeks, at least she could not remember ever having allowed herself any such folly over books entitled " Socialism and Anarchy," or " The Civic Disease," or " The Inner Republic." She was glad to believe that Camilla was " a type," because it was easier to condemn a type than to condemn Camilla, for having heartbeats and flushed cheeks over matters so unsuitable.

In the times when carefully constructed curls tapped against Miss Eunice's flushed

cheeks, it has been supposed, there was more social emphasis on sex. At least there was a difference. Miss Eunice felt the difference, and looked across it in disapproval of Camilla's reading.

Camilla started, gathered the books in an armful, and flashed out of the room, across the hall to her father's library. She settled in a chair beside him.

"Now! What do you think?"

Several books fell on the floor. She spilled others in picking up the first.

"I think your books will lose their backs," Champney rumbled mildly.

The fire leaped and snapped in the fireplace, and the sunlight streamed in at the tall side windows.

"Think of what, my dear?"

"Listen!"

Her father leaned his whitehaired and heavy head on his hand, while she read from the grey volume, as follows:

"'You have remarked too often "I am

as good as you." It is probable that God only knows whether you are or not. You may be better. I think he knows that you are always either better or worse. If you had remarked "You are as good as I," it would have represented a more genial frame of mind. It would have rendered your superiority more probable, since whichever remark you make gives, so far as it goes, its own evidence that it is not true. But indeed it is probable that neither your life nor your ideas are admirable, that your one hope of betterment is, not to become convinced that no one is better than you, but to find someone to whom you can honourably look up. I am asking you to look up, not back, nor away among the long dead years for any cause or ideal. I am asking you to search for your leader among your contemporaries, not satisfied until you find him, not limited in your devotion when you have found him, taking his cause to be yours. I am asking you to remember that

evil is not social, but human; that good is not social, but human. You have heard that an honest man is the noblest work of God. You have heard of no institution which merits that finality of praise. You have heard that every institution is the lengthened shadow of a man. Is it then in shadows or by shadows that we live?' "

Camilla paused.

"I think your author is in a measure a disciple of Carlyle," said Champney.

"Are you interested, daddy? See who wrote it!"

Champney took the volume, read, "Chapter Eighth. Whither My Master Went," and turned back to the title page. "H'm—'The Inner Republic, by Alcott Aidee.' Another discovery, is it?" he asked. "We discover America every other day, my dear! What an extraordinary generation we are!"

Camilla's discovery of her father had been a happy surprise. Happy surprises

are what maids in their Arcadian age are of all creatures most capable of receiving. She called him her "graduate course," and he replied gallantly by calling her his "postponed education." He had had his happy surprise as well. It was an especial, an unexpected reward for the efforts Champney had made—not altogether painless—to realise the lapse of old conditions, and to pick up threads of interest in the new,—that his efforts had brought him to these relations with Camilla; so that the two were able to sit together of a morning, and talk friendly and long, without patronage or impatience.

To realise the lapse of old conditions, to realise that he was obsolete, that his effective days were over! It was a hard matter. Hard, but an old story now, this struggle to realise this change. The books on his shelves had grown to seem passive and lifeless, since they no longer had connection through himself with the stir of existence.

The Websterian periods had taken on a ghostly echo, and the slow ebbing of the war issues had left him with a sense of being stranded on dry sands. There seemed to be a flatness everywhere,—a silence, except for the noisy rattle of the street.

It is a pleasant saying, that "The evening of life comes bringing its own lamp," but it seemed to him it was a drearily false one. The great men of a great time, he thought, were gone, or fast going. It was a stagnation period in his life, pictured in his mind afterward as an actual desert, dividing arable lands. Were the new men so small, so unuplifted, or was it only his own mind grown dry and nerveless? He was afraid it was the latter,—afraid life was dying away, or drying up in his still comfortable body.

He would prove to himself that it was not.

This was the beginning of the effort he had made,—a defiant, half-desperate rally. The struggle began at a definite date. One

day he put away his old books. He bought new ones, and new periodicals, and determined to find the world still alive,—to find again that old sense of the importance of things that were going on. It was an intimate fight this time, unapplauded—against a shadow, a creeping numbness. He fought on, and at length had almost begun to lose hope.

When Camilla came back from college and Eastern friends she dawned upon him in a series of minute surprises. She brought him his victory, and the lamp for his evening. So it came about. The struggle was over, and the longed-for hope and cheer came back to him.

So it came that the relation between them was peculiar. New books had a meaning when Camilla read them to him, as she read from Alcott Aidee's book to-day, while the noise of the freight-yards, and the rattle of the travelling crane unloading a docked ship, sounded dull and distant. The sunlight

came yellow and pleasant through tall windows, and the fire snapped briskly, and Alcott Aidee spoke through the medium of Camilla and the grey volume, making these singular remarks:

"Incarnation of divinity! Surely you have been unfortunate, if in going to and fro in this world you have nowhere observed any measure of divinity incarnated in a man, apparent in ordering or in obedience, in leading or in following, speaking from lips which said, 'Follow me,' as well as from those which said, 'Thy will, not mine be done,' speaking, for aught I know, as largely in one way as the other. I am not measuring divinity. I am showing you where to look for it. I am trying to persuade you that it does not speak from lips which say 'I am as good as you.'"

New books, ran Champney's thoughts, new men, new times, new waves foaming up the old slant shores. But only as they spoke with Camilla's voice, did they seem to him

now to make the numbed cords vibrate again, or comfort his wintry age.

"Isn't it interesting, daddy? If you're going to be frivolous, I shan't read."

Champney was looking at the volume with a grim smile.

"I was thinking that to read only in the middle of the gentleman's book was perhaps not doing him justice. It was perhaps why I did not understand where he began, or where he was going. It seems to be neither old democracy nor new socialism, but more like the divine rights of some kind of aristocracy. Shall we not read the book through in order, my dear? Having become convinced that Mr. Aidee himself contains a measure of this divinity, and having taken him for our leader, shall we not then induce our recalcitrant friend Dick to join us, and in that way induce him to become a politician?"

This was the Champney manner in the stately vein of irony.

"Oh!" Camilla pushed her hand through her hair, a Champney gesture, "Dick was horrid about that."

"Recalcitrant, Hum! Horrid, horridus, bristling, Ha! Not inappropriate to the attitude on that occasion of the said Dick. Not usual for him, I should say. He is like his father, Camilla. A quiet man, but striking, the latter. You don't remember him?"

"Oh, yes! But you see, Dick didn't like it, because Mr. Aidee asked me to help him. But it isn't like him to be fussy. Anyway, I liked it, but Dick didn't. So!" Camilla pushed back her hair, another Champney gesture—the defiant one. "Now, what made him act like hornets?"

"I also took the liberty not to like it, Camilla," with a rumble of thorough bass.

Camilla glanced up, half startled, and put a small warm hand into her father's hand, which was large, bony, and wrinkled. The two hands clasped instinctively hard, as if for assurance that no breach should come

between them, no distance over which the old and the young hand could not clasp.

Camilla turned back to Alcott Aidee's book, and read on. Champney found himself now listening in a personal, or what he might have described as a feminine, way; he found himself asking, not what meaning or truth there was in this writer, but asking what meaning it might have toward Camilla, at the Arcadian age when maids are fain of surprises. He thought of Dick Hennion, of the Hennions, father and son. One always wondered at them, their cross-lot logic, their brevities, their instinct as to where the fulcrum of a thing rested. One believed in them without asking reasons—character was a mysterious thing—a certain fibre or quality. Ah! Rick Hennion was dead now, and Henry Champney's fighting days were over. It was good to live, but a weariness to be too old. He thought of Alcott Aidee, of his gifts and temperament, his theory of devotion and divinity—an erratic star, a comet of

a man, who had a great church—by the way, it was not a church—a building at least, with a tower full of clamouring bells, and a swarming congregation. It was called "The Seton Avenue Assembly." So Aidee had written this solid volume on—something or other. One could see he was in earnest, but that Camilla should be over-earnest in the wake of his argument seemed a strong objection to the argument. A new man, an able writer—all very interesting—but—— In fact, he might prove resident divinities, or prove perpetual incarnations of the devil, if he chose, but what did the fellow mean by asking Camilla to—— In fact, it was an unwarranted liberty. Champney felt suddenly indignant. Camilla read on, and Champney disliked the doctrine, whatever it was, in a manner defined even by himself as "feminine."

"'Not in vain,'" she read, "'have men sought in nature the assurance of its large currents, of its calm and self-control, the

knitting up of "the ravelled sleave of care," "the breathing balm of mute insensate things," "the sleep that is among the lonely hills." It has been written,

> "Into the woods my Master went
> Clean foresprent,

and that "the little grey leaves were kind to him." All these things have I found, and known them. Was it there my Master went? I found the balm, the slumber, and the peace. But I found no inspiration. This, wherever I found it, always spoke with human lips, always looked out of human eyes. The calm of nature is as the calm of the past. Green battlefields lie brooding, because the issue is over; deep woods and secluded valleys, because the issue is elsewhere. The apostle who met a vision of his Master on the Appian Way, and asked, "Whither goest thou?" was answered, "Into the city." Do you ask again, whither he went? I answer that he went on with the vanguard of the fight; which vanguard is on

the front wave and surf of these times; which front wave and surf is in the minds and moods of persons; not in creeds, customs, formulas, churches, governments, or anywhere else at all; for the key to all cramped and rusted locks lies in humanity, not in nature; in cities, not in solitudes; in sympathy, not in science; in men, not in institutions; not in laws, but in persons.'

"Aren't you interested, daddy?"

"Yes, my dear. Why do you ask?"

"You look so absent-minded. But it's a new chapter now, and it's called 'Constitutions.'" Camilla laughed triumphantly.

"Constitutions! Then the gentleman will be political. Go on."

"'Chapter ninth,'" she read. "'Constitutions.'

"'Most men govern themselves as monarchies; some as despotisms that topple to anarchies, some as nearly absolute monarchies; but mainly, and on the whole, they govern themselves as partially restricted or

constitutional monarchies; which constitutions are made up of customs, precedents, and compromises, British Constitutions of opportunism and common law. Indeed, they claim that the inner life *must* be a monarchy by its nature, and every man's soul his castle. They are wrong. It must be a republic, and every man's soul an open house.

"'Now, it is nowhere stated in any Declaration or Constitution put forth of this Inner Republic that "all men are by nature free and equal." If such a declaration occurred to the framers of this Constitution, they would seem to have thought it difficult to reconcile with observation, and not very pertinent either. As a special qualification for citizenship, it appears to be written there that a man must love his neighbour as himself—meaning as nearly as he can, his citizenship graded to his success; and as a general maxim of common law, it is written that he shall treat other men as he would like them

to treat him, or words to that effect. However, although to apply and interpret this Constitution there are courts enough, and bewildering litigation, and counsel eager with their expert advice, yet the Supreme Court holds in every man's heart its separate session.' "

To all of which Champney's thoughts made one singular comment. "Camilla," they insisted, "Camilla."

## CHAPTER IV

### Muscadine Street

WHILE Camilla and Henry Champney bent a dark and a white head over Aidee's book, Miss Eunice in the parlour bent a grey head over her knitting, and thought of Camilla, and disapproved of the type of girls who neither knitted nor even embroidered; who had hot cheeks, not over such subjects, for instance, as "Richard," but over such subjects as "Problems of the Poor," and "Civic Diseases."

Miss Eunice looked up from her knitting now and then, and through the window she saw across the river the huddle of East Argent's disordered roofs, and factories, and chimneys powerfully belching black smoke, and disapproved of what she saw.

There were others than Miss Eunice who disapproved of East Argent. Dwellers on

Herbert and Seton Avenues, those quiet, shaded avenues, with their clean, broad lawns, were apt to do so.

Yet it was a corporate part of Port Argent and the nearest way to it was over the Maple Street bridge.

The P. and N. Railroad passed under the East Argent approach to the bridge, coming from its further freight yards on the right. At the first corner beyond, if there happened to be a street sign there, which was unlikely, the sign would read " Muscadine Street."

Muscadine Street left ran down the river toward the belching factories; Muscadine Street right, up the river between the freight yards on one side and a row of houses on the other; depressing houses, of wood or brick, with false front elevations feebly decorated; ground floors mainly shops for meat, groceries, liquors, candies; upper floors overrun with inhabitants. There were slouching men on the sidewalk, children quarrelling in the muddy street, unkempt

women in the windows, of whom those with dull faces were generally fat, those with clever faces generally drawn and thin. It was a street with iron clamours and triumphant smells. It was a street whose population objected to neither circumstance, and found existence on the whole interesting and more than endurable. It was a street unaware of Miss Eunice Champney's disapproval, and undisturbed by that of Herbert and Seton Avenues. It is singular how many people can be disapproved of by how many others, and neither be the better or worse on that account.

On the second corner was a grocery occupying the ground floor of a flat-roofed, clapboarded house. Around the corner, on a side street leading east, a wooden stair ran up on the outside. At the top of the stair a sign in black letters on a yellow background implied that "James Shays, Shoemaker," was able to mend all kinds of footwear, and would do so on request. Inside the hallway, the first

door on the right was the shoemaker's door, and within were two small rooms, of which the first was the shop.

A wooden table stood in the middle of the room, with a smoky-chimneyed lamp thereon, some newspapers, and half of a book that had been ripped savagely in two. A double shoemaker's bench stood next the window, a cooking stove and a cupboard opposite. Clothes hung on wall-hooks, hides lay on the floor.

Shays sat on one end of the bench, a grey-haired, grey-moustached, watery-eyed man, pegging a shoe vaguely. A black-haired little man with a thin black beard sat on the other end, stitching a shoe fiercely. A red-lipped, red-cheeked, thick-nosed, thick-necked man with prominent eyes, sat tilted back in one of the wooden chairs, stating his mind deliberately.

Most of these phases of Muscadine Street might be found so arranged, on most mornings, by any visitor. Shays and the

red-cheeked Coglan could not be depended on; but the men on the sidewalk, the women in the windows, the children in the street, the clamour and the smells would be there; also the grocer, the butcher, and Hicks, the stitcher of vehement stitches. If Coglan and Shays were there, Coglan would be found in the process of stating his mind.

Hicks' eyes were black, restless, and intense, his mouth a trifle on one side, his forehead high with a deep line down the middle. It was a painful line; when he smiled it seemed to point downward frowningly to the fact that the smile was one-sided.

Coglan was Shays' associate in the pursuit of happiness. His value lay in this: that upon a certain amount of hard liquor purchased by Shays, and divided fairly and orderly between them, Shays became needy of help, and Coglan generally remained in good condition and able to take him home. Hicks was Shays' partner in the shop. His

value lay in this: that he did twice as much work as Shays, and was satisfied with half the profits. Both men were valuable to Shays, and the shop supported the three.

The relations between them had grown settled with time. Nearly four years earlier Hicks had entered Shays' shop. There he learned to cobble footwear in some incredibly short time, and took his place in the apprehension of Muscadine Street. Hicks he called himself and nothing more. "Hicks" was a good enough name. It went some distance toward describing the brooding and restless little man, with his shaking, clawlike fingers, smouldering temper, and gift for fluent invective. Some said he was an anarchist. He denied it, and went into fiery definitions, at which the grocer and candy man shook their heads vaguely, and the butcher said, "Says he ain't, an' if he ain't, he ain't, not as I see"; which seemed a conclusive piece of logic. At any rate he was Hicks.

The elderly Shays was a peaceful soul, a dusty mind, a ruined body. He was travelling through his life now at a pace that would be apt to bring him to the end of it at no distant date, enjoying himself, as he understood enjoyment, or as enjoyment was interpreted to him by the wise Coglan. Coglan maintained a solidly planted dislike of Hicks, whose attacks threatened his dominance, whose acrid contempt and unlimited vocabulary sometimes even threatened his complacence. Coglan's wisdom saw that the situation was preferable to searching for jobs, and that the situation depended on Hicks' acceptance of it. Hicks was a mystery to him, as well as to Shays, and something of a fear, but Coglan was not disturbed by the mystery. He could leave that alone and do very well. But Hicks was a poisoned needle. Hicks knew where to find Coglan's sensitive point and jab it. Coglan hated him solidly, but balancing his dislike against his interest and ease, Coglan wisely found that the latter

were more solid still—beyond comparison solid.

All this could be learned by any visitor inquiring in Muscadine Street. The grocer underneath would add tersely that Shays was a soak, but good-hearted; that Hicks was a fool, and ought to set up shop for himself; that Coglan was a loafer, and had his bread buttered now about to suit him. Disapproval of each other was current in Muscadine Street. It was a part of their interest in life.

The same morning sunlight that slanted through Henry Champney's tall library and parlour widows was slanting through the small streaked window of Shays, the shoemender. Coglan was stating his mind.

"Jimmy Shays, yer a good man," he was saying slowly; "an', Hicksy, yer an' industhrious man; but nayther of ye is a wise man. but Jimmy is the wisest man of ye two. For why? Ask that, an' I says this. For when Jimmy wants a bit of thinkin' done for

him, he gets a sensible man to do it, an' a poor man, an' a workin' man like himself, an' a man that's a friend, and that stands by him in throuble. But what does ye do, Hicksy? Ye goes over the river. Ye goes up to Seton Avenue. Ye listens to a chin-waggin' preacher. An' what's his name? Aidee! He ain't a workin' man himself, but wears the clothes of the rich, an' ates his dinner wid the rich, an' says hard words of the friends of the poor. An' yer desaved, Hicksy."

Hicks stopped work and shook a thin fist at Coglan. "If you're talkin' of him, you keep your manners."

"Oi, the Preacher! Oi, he might be meanin' well, Hicksy. I ain't sayin' not."

"What are you saying then?" jabbing viciously with his needle. "Damn! You're an Irishman, ain't you? Chin-wagging institution yourself. What! Who's the working man? You! Ain't you got a description of you that's vivider 'n that?" breaking

into a cackling laugh. "Then I'll ask you, what friends of the poor you're talking about so glib, like a greased wheel?"

"Oi! Yer askin' what I mean by a friend, Hicksy? Ye are! An' yer right, an' I'll show ye the point. I'll speak to ye of John Murphy, now, what I've had many a drink on him, an' a helpin' hand. A friend is a friend in need. That's him. Now, thin, Murphy's a friend of Wood's, for he says so. Now, thin, I'll show you Dick Hennion. For if I wants a job, I says the word to Murphy, an' he speaks the word maybe to Hennion an' he gets me a job, for he done it onct, an' I know, don't I? if so be it happen I wants a job. An' Hennion's a friend of Wood's, too, as anywan knows. Now! A friend of me, I says, is a man that acts friendly to me. That's him. So would ye say, Hicksy, if ye was a wise man an' a man of sense, instead of chasin' afther a chin-waggin' preacher, like a schnare-drum afther a

thrombone. Haw, haw, haw! a brass thrombone! But Wood's a friend of the poor, an' I've proved it. For why? For I say it's the rich that he bleeds, but the poor man he's friendly to. Now, thin! What does Aidee do but say the bad word of Wood. In consequence, in consequence, I says,"—and Coglan smote his knee,—" he ain't no friend of the poor."

Hicks' black eyes glittered and focussed themselves, a concentrated stare at a minutely small spot between Coglan's eyes. His teeth clicked. Coglan's laugh died away. He turned his eyes aside and rubbed his red face uneasily.

" Coglan," said Hicks, " I warned you before. You shake your mouth at the Preacher again and I'll stick a knife into your dirty throat. You hear that!"

Coglan's redness showed purple spots.

" Think I'm afraid of ye!"

" Yep, I think you are."

" I'll break your little chick bones!"

"Yep. You're afraid, and you better stay so."

"Hicksy!" broke in Shays with quavering voice. "Tom! we're all friends, ain't we? Now, then, Tom, Hicksy makes a point you leave out the Preacher, don't he? He'll argue peaceful. Jus' leave out the Preacher. Won't you, Hicksy? Hey? You'll argue peaceful."

"I said I would."

"Leave out the Preacher," said Shays. "All friens'. Hey?"

Coglan wiped his perspiring face. "I'm a sensible man," he said. "When Jimmy Shays asks a favour, I say, sure! I'm a sensible man." He looked resentfully and uneasily at Hicks, but seemed relieved to withdraw from his aggressive position without losing his dominance.

"Oi! I told ye what I meant by a friend. I said Marve Wood was a friend of the poor, an' I proved it. I'll be fair an' square. I'll ask ye, what's *your* meanin'?"

Hicks dropped his eyes, and fell to his jabbing needlework.

"Friend!" he said. "You mean a man that's useful to you. *You* say so! *You* say so! That's your meaning. Good's what's good for me. Sense is what agrees with me. Nothing's got any value that ain't valuable to that God-forsaken, whiskey-soaked 'me,' named Coglan, that's got no more value than to fertilise a patch of potatoes. Friend! You get another word. I got nothing to say to you. But I'll tell you this. I'll tell you what I think of Wood. He's got a reckoning coming. What is Wood? I'll tell you that he's the meeting point of two enemies—the corporations and the people, the rich and the poor. His job's to keep in with both. That's what his friendliness amounts to. His job's to sell the corporations what belongs to the people. And he'll grin at the people on one side, so! And he'll wink at the corporations on the other, so! And he'll say: 'How do, Johnny, and Billy, and Sammy?' So! And

he'll say to the corporations, 'What 'll you give for Johnny's hat?' So! Then he gives Johnny half what he gets for the hat, so! Then he's got Sammy and Billy to back the deal, so! Well, what's Wood! I've told you what he is. Friend of the poor! What do you know about it?" He dropped the shoe, shook his loose fingers in the air, and cried. "He's a cancer! Cut him out! He's an obstruction! Blow him up! What, then? Then I say this, Tom Coglan, and I say it's a good thing when damn rascals are afraid!"

"Quotin' the Preacher?" said Coglan complacently.

Hicks narrowed his black eyes again, and focussed them on Coglan, who turned away uneasily. Hicks went on:

"What you'd ask, if you were quick enough with your point, is whether Wood ever did you a bad turn? No, he didn't. Nor said a word to me in his life, nor I to him, nor want to. Will you ask me what

I got against him, then, or won't you, or are you too fat-headed to know what I'm talking about?"

"Oi!" said Coglan. "Yer right. I'll ask ye that."

"And I'll say that so long as this 'me' of mine"—tapping his narrow chest—"ain't fertilising a patch of potatoes, a friend ain't going to mean any man that does me a good turn, nor an enemy mean anybody that does me a bad turn. A man that means no more 'n that, ain't fit to fertilise turnips. That's my meaning, Tom Coglan."

"Oi! Quotin' the Preacher."

"Yes, I am, some of it."

He went back to his stitching sullenly. Coglan and Shays looked at each other and then stealthily at Hicks.

"I hear no talk against the Preacher," Hicks went on, after a time; "I won't, and why not is my business. He ain't for you to understand, nor the like of you, nor the like of Jimmy Shays,—neither him, nor his talk,

nor his book. What of it? There ain't another man in Port Argent but me that understands that book. But the Preacher don't do all my thinking for me, and you're wrong there, Coglan. What do you know about him, or me? What's the use of my talking to you? But if you did know, and then if you said, 'The Preacher holds a man back till he's like to go crazy, and always did'; or if you said, 'The Preacher's for setting you on fire and then smothering it, till he's burnt your bowels out'; and if you talked like that, as understanding him and me, maybe I'd talk to you. I'd talk so, too, for his way ain't my way."

He pointed a crooked finger at the torn book on the table.

"See that book! It's called 'Communism.' Half of it's right and half of it's not. That's my way."

His two-handed gesture of ripping the book in two was so sudden and savage that Coglan dropped his chair and turned to look

at the book in a startled way, as if he expected to see something ghastly.

"But it ain't the Preacher's way. But I ain't the man to be held back," said Hicks, "and patted and cooed over. Not me. Show me a snake and I stamp on it! Show me the spot and I hit it! Damn!"

He twisted his mouth. His teeth clicked again, and his crooked fingers drove the glittering needles swiftly back and forth through the leather. Coglan stared at him with prominent eyeballs and mouth open. Shays wiped his glasses, and then his red-lidded eyes with his coat sleeve.

"All frien's, Hicksy! Ain't we?" he murmured uneasily.

Coglan recovered. "An' that's right, too. Jimmy Shays is a kind man and a peaceable man, an' I'm a sensible man, an' yer an industhrious man, but yer not a wise man, Hicksy, an' "—with sudden severity—"I'll thank ye not to stomp on Tom Coglan."

He got up. Shays rose, too, and put on his coat, and both went out of the door. Hicks gave a cackling laugh, but did not look after them.

Presently he finished the shoe, laid it down, rubbed his hands, and straightened his back. Then he went and got the torn book, sat down, and read in it half an hour or more, intent and motionless.

The factory whistles blew for twelve o'clock. He rose and went to a side cupboard, took out a leathern rifle case, put a handful of cartridges in his pockets, and left the shop.

The grocer's children in the side doorway fled inward to the darkness of the hall as he passed. The grocer's wife also saw him, and drew back behind the door. He did not notice any of them.

The long eastward-leading street grew more and more dusty and unpaved. He passed empty lots and then open fields, cornfields, clumps of woods, and many trestles of

the oil wells. He climbed a rail fence and entered a large piece of woods, wet and cool. The new leaves were just starting from their buds.

It was a mild April day, with a silvery, misty atmosphere over the green mass of the woods. A few of the oil wells were at work, thudding in the distance. Cattle were feeding in the wet green fields. Birds, brown and blue, red-breasted and grey-breasted, twittered and hopped in tree and shrub. A ploughman in a far-off field shouted to his team. Crows flapped slowly overhead, dropping now and then a dignified, contented croak. The only other sound was the frequent and sharp crack of a rifle from deep in the centre of the woods.

## CHAPTER V

### Tecumseh Street

TECUMSEH STREET was the fourth street back from the river. Tradition said that the father and certain aunts of the man who laid out the street had been scalped by Tecumseh, the Indian. It was the only distinguished event in his family, and he wished to commemorate it.

The street was paved with undressed Medina. The newspaper offices were all there, and the smash and scream of undressed Medina under traffic was in the columns. It was satisfactory to Port Argent. The proper paving of streets in front of newspaper offices was never petitioned in the Council. Opposite the offices was a half block of vacant lots, a high board fence of advertisements around it.

The space between was packed with a

jostling crowd. A street lamp lit a small section of it. Lights from the office windows fell in patches on faces, hats, and shoulders. A round moon floated above the tower of *The Chronicle* Building with a look of mild speculation, like a "Thrice Blessed Buddha," leading in the sky his disciple stars, who all endeavoured to look mildly speculative, and saying, "Yonder, oh, mendicants! is a dense mass of foolish desires, which indeed squirm as vermin in a pit, and are unpleasant to the eye of meditation. Because the mind of each individual is there full of squirming desires, even as the individual squirms in the mass." No doubt it looks so when one floats so far over it.

Opposite the windows of *The Chronicle* (Independent-Reform) and *The Press* (Republican) the advertising boards were covered with white cloth, and two blinding circles shone there of rival stereopticons. There was no board fence opposite *The Western Advocate* (Democratic), and no

stereopticon in the windows. This was deplored. It showed a lack of public spirit—a want of understanding of the people's needs. If there could be no stereopticon without a board fence, there should be a brass band.

The proprietor of *The Advocate* sent out for a bushel of Roman candles, and discharged them from his windows by threes, of red, white, and blue. This was poetic and sufficient.

The stereopticons flashed on the white circles the figures of returns, when there were any, pictures and slurs when there were no figures,—a picture of a cage full of riotous monkeys on *The Chronicle* circle, underwritten, "The Council,"—a picture of an elderly lady with a poke bonnet and lifted hands of reprehension, on the *Press* circle, underwritten, "Independent Reform."

"Auction of the City of Port Argent!" flashed *The Chronicle*. "Office of M. Wood. Cash on Delivery of Goods."

"All citizens must go to Sunday School or be fined," from *The Press.*

"6th Ward. Rep. Plurality, 300."

"1st Ward. Ind. Ref. Plurality, 28."

Whish! a rocket from the windows of *The Western Advocate.* And the crowd roared and shuffled.

The last of *The Press* windows to the left belonged to a little room off the press-room, containing a desk, a board table, and several chairs. The desk seemed only to be used as an object at which to throw articles, in order that they might roll to the floor. There were crude piles of newspapers on it and about it, hats, a section of a stove pipe, and a backgammon board. The table looked as if it sometimes might be used to write on.

The room was supposed to be the editor's, but no one in Port Argent believed Charlie Carroll ever stayed in the same place long enough to pre-empt it. He edited *The Press* from all over the city, and wrote the edi-

torials wherever he stopped to catch breath. *The Press* editorials were sometimes single sentences, sometimes a paragraph. More than a paragraph was supposed to mean that Carroll had ridden on a street car, and relieved the tedium of his long imprisonment.

A number of men stood at the window or stood grouped back, and watched the canvas across the street. The only light came through the door from the press-room.

Carroll put his curly head through the door, shouted something and vanished. *The Press* stereopticon withdrew a view of Yosmite Valley and threw on the canvas:

"Recount in the 1st Ward announced."

*The Chronicle* cleared its canvas promptly and flung across the street:

"Fraud!"

Only two men sat still by the window of the darkened room. The rest rushed out.

The street was in an uproar, hats crushed

over heads, fists shaken in the air to the instructive comment of the moon.

"How foolish, oh, mendicants! How do men make for themselves troubles, as though one should stir quiet waters with his hand, saying, 'It is a storm. The gods have afflicted me.'"

"How foolish!" said one of the men at the darkened window. "Those boys are terribly anxious to carry that Ward, and no point in it, Dick!"

"Suppose I'd been out canvassing for Reform, Wood? Think you'd have lost?"

Wood peered curiously at Hennion in the half-lit dusk. "Like enough! Well—want anything in particular? I admit the bill, if it ain't too big."

"I don't want anything."

Wood tilted his chair and was silent a moment.

"Look what comes of making rows," he went on. "I wouldn't have that Ward

now for a gift. *The Chronicle*'s red in the face with wrath and happiness. Everybody's hair on end as it is. Disgusting, ain't it? Well—down east, where the land's tilted up so you can turn a section over bottom upwards by heaving one end with a rail, well—there was a man there had a farm at the bottom of a long hill, and his neighbour's punkins up above used to roll down on him. But he didn't make any row, because his yard was littered with punkins, no. He ate the punkins. Well, now, take the neighbour above, he might have gone down and called somebody a thief for not returning strayed punkins, and two pillars of the church might have disliked each other. But he didn't. He built a board fence along the lower edge of his cornfield and caught his own punkins. And there was mutual respect, mutual respect. Well—the boys, they always want to fight. They go round saying, 'The old man's level-headed,' but they ain't satisfied with building that fence

to catch those punkins without heaving a rock down an aggravating man's chimney, or else it makes 'em mad to have punkins rolled at 'em, and moreover they don't roll fast enough. Disgusting, ain't it?"

"Wood! Wood! Where in——" Carroll rushed in and turned up the electric light impatiently. "Wh-what you going to do about the First Ward?"

He had thin bright curly hair, the slimmest of bodies, and moved like a restless insect.

"Tell 'em to count it twenty-eight Reform plurality, no more and no less! And turn off that light! And clear out! Well—now—that Charlie Carroll, he's a living fidget. Well—when they used to race steamboats on the Mississippi, they'd put a nigger on the safety valve, so it wouldn't get nervous. I've heard so. I've seen 'em tie it up with a string. Well—winning the race depended some on the size and serenity of the nigger, that 'd see it wasn't his place to worry, for

he'd get blown off all right in the natural course of things. For sitting on a safety valve you want a nigger that won't wriggle. Well—Charlie's a good man. Keeps people thinking about odds and ends of things. If one thing out of forty is going to happen, his mind's going to be a sort of composite picture of the whole forty. Sees eight or ten dimensions to a straight line. Yes—folks are pretty liberal. They'll allow there's another side to 'most anything, and a straight line's got no business to be so gone particular. It's the liberal-mindedness of the public that lets us win out, of course. But—you've got to sit still sometimes, and wait for the earth to turn round."

"I suppose you have. It 'll turn round."

"Yes, it 'll turn round."

The tumult outside had subsided in a dull, unsettled rumble. The moon went into retreat among silver-grey clouds. Tecumseh Street muttered in the darkness of its pit. The stereopticons continued.

"*The Chronicle* suspects the U. S. Census," from *The Press.*

"Census O. K. Wood didn't make it," from *The Chronicle.*

"Port Argent stands by the G. O. P."

"Did Wood mention his Candidate's Name?"

*The Press* threw defiantly the portrait of its candidate for mayor.

"Pull the String and See it Jump!" from *The Chronicle.*

Behind *The Press* stereopticon a telephone jingled, telegraph instruments clicked, men wrote busily at a long table under a row of pendent electric lights that swayed in the draught.

A large man came in, panting. His short coat swung back under his arm-pits, away from the vast curve of his waistcoat. He had a falling moustache and a round face.

"Vere iss Vood? So!" He peered curiously into the darker room. "Vere iss——"

"Come along, Freiburger," said Wood. "Pull up a chair. Well—how's your Ward? All quiet?"

Freiburger settled into a chair with the same caution.

"Oh, yes, quviet. Not shtill, but quviet."

"What's the difference between 'still' and 'quiet'?" asked Hennion.

"Vell, it vass drunk, und someone vass punch Cahn der barber's nose, but not me."

"You call it quiet till somebody hits you?"

"Vy should he hit me?" cried Freiburger indignantly.

"He shouldn't," said Hennion.

"No! Vell, it vass not shtill, but quviet. Ach!" sadly, "ven a man iss drunk, vy don't he shleep?"

"He wants to stay awake and enjoy it."

Freiburger shook his head slowly and felt of his nose, as if to be quite sure before taking the responsibility of repeating the statement.

"It vass Cahn. It vass not me."

Wood sat silently, looking through the window to where the stereopticons flashed over the crowd's changing emotions, half listening to the conversation near him. Freiburger peered anxiously at him in the dusk. His mind was trembling with the thrill and tumult of the day, longing that Wood might say something, utter some sentence that it might cling to, clasp about with comprehension, and be safe from wandering, unguaranteed ideas. Hennion seemed interested in examining Freiburger's soul.

"Freiburger, you're as honest a man as I know."

"Vell, yes, I'm honest. I don't know who you know."

"You never owed a dollar you didn't pay."

"Oh, no, I don' do it."

"Business fair?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, what did you want to get on the Council for?"

"Oh! Vell! It vass goot for business." He seemed pleased to talk about this, but expression was a matter of labour and excitement. "Vell! You see! Die boys sie come at Freiburger's saloon, und I know 'em all on Maple Street und der Fourt Vard. Und nights at Freiburger's I hear von der shobs und der Union und der prices. Und sie tell me vy der carriage factory strike. Und sie tell me Hennion iss a shquvare man, und Vood vill do as he say he vill do, und Shamieson in der freight yards iss a hog, und Ranald Cam iss make money, und Fater Harra iss teach lil' boys fight mit gloves in St. Catherine's parochial school und bleed der badness out of der kleine noses. Und sie say, 'I loss my shob, Freiburger!' 'My lil' boy sick, Freiburger.' Ach, so! All dings in der Vard iss tell me. Vell now, aber, look here! I am a Councilman. Der iss no man so big on Maple Street as Fater

Harra und me, und Freiburger's iss head-quaverters of der Vard, und das iss goot for business."

"That's all right. I see your point. But the Council isn't supposed to be an adjunct to the different councilmen's business, is it? I suppose the Ward understood itself to be trusting its interests in your hands, don't you? and you're a sort of guardian and trustee for the city, aren't you? Seems as if that would take a good deal of time and worry, because you'd want to be sure you were doing right by the city and the Ward, and it's a complicated affair you have to look after, and a lot of people's interests at stake."

Wood stirred slightly in his chair, partly with pleasure at the humour of it, partly with uneasiness. It was all right for Hennion to examine the Freiburger soul, if he liked, but to cast on its smooth seas such wide-stirring, windy ideas seemed unkind to Freiburger.

Freiburger puffed heavily in the darkness.

The excitement of expressing himself subsided, and Hennion's idea opened before him, a black gulf into which he could for a while only stare dubiously. His mind reached out vaguely for something familiar to cling to.

"Vell—I don' know—die boys and Fater Harra und—Mein Gott! I ask Vood!" He puffed heavily again after the struggle and triumph.

"Couldn't do better. It's what your boys expect of you anyhow."

And Hennion returned to his silence. Freiburger's soul glowed peacefully once more.

"It iss Vood's business, hein?"

He looked from one to the other of the impassive, self-controlled men. He wanted Wood to say something that he could carry away for law and wisdom and conviction, something to which other ideas might be fitted and referred. He had the invertebrate instinct of a mollusk to cling to some-

thing not itself, something rooted and undriven, in the sea.

"You've done well, Freiburger," said Wood, rousing himself. "Tell the boys they've done well. Stay by your beer and don't worry till the keg's dry."

Freiburger rolled away, murmuring his message loyally. "Stay by mein—a—mein keg's dry."

"Freiburger won't cost you much," Hennion murmured after a while. Wood swung softly in his chair.

"Got something on your mind, ain't you, Dick?"

"Oh, yes. Of course. But I don't know what it is. I've fished for it till I'm tired. I've analysed Freiburger, and didn't get much. Now I'd like to examine your soul in a strong chemical solution. Maybe I'm a bit embarrassed."

Wood chuckled. "Go ahead. Most men 'll lie, if you give 'em time to rearrange their ideas. Well—it won't take me so

long." His manner became genial. "You've got a good head, Dick. Well—I'll tell what I'm thinking. It's this. The old man 'll have to drop his job one of these days, and—if you're feeling for pointers—I don't say you are, but supposing you are—I don't mind saying I shall back you to head the organization. Maybe—well,—in fact, I don't suppose there's much money in it you'd care to touch—maybe there ain't any—but there's a place for the right man. I like you. I liked your father. He was built something your way. The boys want somebody over 'em that won't wriggle off the safety valve, and knows how to pick up punkins peacefully as they come. This First Ward business—well, you've got a pretty good grip through the crowd to begin with."

"Now there!" broke in Hennion. "You and Aidee are both trying to do the same thing. You want to get me into politics. I don't care for your primaries and

committees. I don't see ten cents' difference to the city which party runs it. I dare say whoever runs it expects to make a living out of it. Why do you both come to me?"

"I guess we've both got an idea you're useful."

Hennion thought a moment and then spoke more quietly.

"Henry Champney used to boss this section. He did it from the platform instead of the committee room. And my father handled bigger contracts than I've touched yet. But Champney didn't ask him to run his canal into the next caucus, or furnish stray batches of constituents with jobs. Understand, I'm not grumbling about the last. Champney stayed on his platform, and my father stayed in his big ditch and dug. The proper thing now seems to be for everybody to get into the street and row around together. Here's Aidee too thinks he's got to jump into it now, and take with

him—take with him everything he can reach."

"That's straight," murmured Wood. "So they do."

"Yes, and I call off, myself."

"All right. I was only guessing what you had in your mind. Well—it's business sets the pace nowadays. 'Most everything else has to catch its gait or be left. I remember Champney forty years gone. He was a fine picture, when he got up and spread himself. He didn't do anything that's here now, unless it's a volume of his speeches, congressional and occasional. Not much. He kept us all whooping for Harry Clay. Well—Clay's dead, Whig Party and Compromises and all burnt up. Your father built sixty miles of canal. Canal stock's pretty dead now, but that's not his fault. He laid a few thousand miles of railroad, went around this place and that, cleaning up the country. Several million people travel his railroads and walk his bridges. Any-

body ever call him a great man like Henry Champney? Gone little he cared if they did or didn't. He and his like were a sight more important. Well—no; Champney didn't ask favours of anybody in those days. And he didn't ask votes. They shovelled 'em at him, and he went on telling 'em the Constitution was the foundation of America, and Harry Clay the steeple. They weren't. Rick Hennion and his like were the foundation, and there wasn t any steeple. If you ask what they're all rowing round in the street for now, why, I don't know. I guess they've all found out the point's got to be fought out there or nowhere. Well—better think over what I was telling you, Dick. You're Rick Hennion's son. Well—it's none of my business—but—I'd gone like to see you old Champney's son-in-law—if that's it. I believed in Champ ey once, and shouted for Clay, and thought there was something in it. I did, that's a fact. I'd lock horns with any other bull then, and

swear my name was Righteousness and his was Sin."

"Well, but Champney——"

"Yes—Champney!"

"When he turned a vote, it meant he'd persuaded a man, didn't it?"

"Yes—Champney! His best argument was a particular chest tone. If I tell a man, 'Hullo, Jimmy!' and give him a cigar, it's as reasonable as a chest tone."

"It's not in my line, Wood," said Hennion after a silence. "What makes you so down? You're not old."

"Going on seventy, Dick." Wood's mood seemed more than usually frank and talkative. He seemed to be smoothing out the creases in his mind, hunting into corners that he hardly knew himself, showing a certain wistfulness to explain his conception of things, complex and crumpled by the wear and pressures of a long life, possibly taking Hennion to represent some remembrance that he would like to be friends with after

long estrangement, and in that way pleading with his own youth to think kindly of him. Or it might have been he was thinking of "Rick" Hennion, who helped him forty years before, and stayed with him longest of worn-out ideals.

There was a rush of feet and clamour of voices in the press-room.

"Wood! Wood!"

"First Ward."

"Thrown out forty votes."

"Wouldn't do what you told 'em."

The little room was jammed with men, thinned out, and jammed again. The electric light flashed up.

"What's to pay now?"

*The Chronicle* flung its bold cone of light and glaring challenge across the street. It seemed to strike the canvas with a slap.

"Forty Reform votes thrown out in 1st Ward. Fraud!"

A hush fell on Tecumseh Street. Then a roar went up that seemed to shake the

buildings. Tecumseh Street thundered below, monstrous and elemental, and trembled above like a resonant drum. The mob rolled against the brick front of the block like a surf that might be expected to splash any moment up the flat perpendicular. Grey helmets of policemen tossed on the surface. Faces were yellow and greenish-white in the mingled electric-light and moonlight. Fists and spread hands were shaken at *The Press* windows. Five or six heads were in the window of the little room. Wood's face was plain to make out by his grey shovel-beard. They shouted comments in each other's ears.

"It's a riot."

"No!"

"Looks like the bottom of hell, don't it?"

Then a little spit of smoke and flame darted like a snake's tongue between the advertising boards, seven feet above the sidewalk. There was a sharp crack that only the nearest heard.

Wood flung up his hand, pitched forward, and hung half over the window sill.

Someone directly beneath, looking up, saw a head hanging, felt a drop splash on his face, and drew back wincing.

The thrill and hush spread from the centre. It ran whisperingly over the mass. The roar died away in the distance to right and left. Tecumseh Street was still, except for the crash where a policeman tore a board from the advertisements with a heave of burly shoulders, and plunged through into the darkness of empty lots.

The little room above was now crowded and silent, like the street. They laid Wood on the table with a coat under his head. He coughed and blinked his eyes at the familiar faces, leaning over him, strained and staring.

"You boys are foolish. Charlie Carroll—I want—take Hennion—Ranald Cam, you hear me! Becket—Tuttle."

It was like a Roman emperor dispensing

the succession, some worn Augustus leaving historic counsel out of his experience of good and evil and the cross-breeds of expediency—meaning by good, good for something, and by evil, good for nothing.

"Seems queer to be plugged at my time of life. Take Hennion. You ain't got any heads. Dick!"

Hennion stood over him. Wood looked up wistfully, as if there were something he would like to explain.

"The game's up to you, Dick. I played it the only way I knew how."

The moon floated clear above the street, and mild and speculative. Ten minutes passed, twenty, thirty. The mass began to sway and murmur, then caught sight of Carroll in the window, lifting his hand, and was quiet.

"Gentlemen, Mr. Wood is dead."

For a moment there was hardly a motion. Then the crowd melted away, shuffling and murmuring, into half a score of dim streets.

## CHAPTER VI

### Alcott Aidee

THE Sexton Avenue Assembly hall was a large building of red brick, with wide windows and a tower full of bells, and Aidee lived across the Avenue in a block of bay-windowed houses painted grey, the third house from the corner. Aidee rented rooms on the floor above the drawing-room, but his study was in the Assembly building. The house belonged to one Mrs. Tillotson, sometime wife of one Colonel Tillotson. She wrote articles for *The Chronicle,* and verses which were military at one time, nay, even ferocious, which afterward reflected her pensioned widowhood, and now reflected Aidee. She hoped her drawing-room might be the intellectual nucleus of the Assembly. She was tall, thin, grey-haired, and impressive.

The people who gathered in Mrs. Tillot-

son's drawing-room were mainly a kind of mental driftwood, caught in the Aideean swirl and backwater, but some of them were more salient. There was Emil Ralbeck, the Assembly organist, a small blond and smoothly bearded man with a pudgy nose, who delivered harsh language melodiously, denounced classes and aggregations of capital, and while not advocating slaughter, yet prophesied it. There was Thomas Berry, whose theme was brotherly love and the Golden Rule. Crime, he said, was mainly the creation of Law. He lay on the sofa, and rumpled his hair, and wished all human beings to call him "Tom." He had fleshy flowing outlines, a heavy shaven face, and a leaden grey eye. There was Alberta Keys, a small, trim, blue-eyed damsel, who thirsted for excitement of the soul and resembled a Maltese kitten; and a large, good-looking, surprised, hesitating young man, who followed in her trail, Ted Secor, son of T. M. Secor, the owner of mines and rolling mills.

T. M. S. had financed the Assembly in the beginning, either because he liked Aidee, or liked sport, or both. The bloom of untroubled health was on Ted Secor's cheek. Hard drinks and ballet girls had suddenly faded from his mind of late, and he followed Alberta Keys in dazed submission into Mrs. Tillotson's drawing-room, and believed his mind now set forever on higher things. These, and others less salient, met in Mrs. Tillotson's drawing-room, and held conversation.

Her furnishings hinted at luxury by means of sofa cushions, at art by means of pictures resting unconventionally on easels, and at literature by the skilfully careless distribution of books. A fireplace with natural gas and asbestos seemed to say, "With all this we are modern, intensely modern."

Aidee's father had been a circuit preacher of New England birth, a man of

radical statements, who declared that the subsidence of Puritanism there had left it spiritually dead. Being a man of radical action, he came to the Middle West in the early forties, and spent the rest of his life in the wake of the frontier. He died at about the end of the war, leaving two sons aged twelve and eight, Alcott and Allen Aidee, "Al" and "Lolly," on a small farm in the prairie. The mother died soon after, on the same small farm.

The story of the two brothers ran on for some twenty years together, and then split apart. It involved school, school-teaching by the elder, in that straggling but populous prairie town, and the pursuit of trouble by the younger. Alcott developed political and religious opinions objected to by school commissioners, and a barn belonging to a school commissioner was fired in consequence by Allen. It was enough. They left it all suddenly, their native town and the stumpy fields of their farm, the corn lot, the muddy

creek, the brick schoolhouse that was so proud of its two stories and three grades of scholars. A newspaper period followed in a disorderly city on the Mississippi, where Allen enjoyed himself prodigally, and the finances of the brothers went to pieces. Allen's endeavour to improve their finances led him to a barred and solitary cell. Alcott was at the door of the prison when he came out.

"Let me go! Oh, Al!" pleaded the younger, "Kick me out!"

"We'll go west," said Alcott. "Come on, Lolly. Never mind."

But Allen took the issue in his own freakish hands, and disappeared, a weak-willed youth, yet secret and sudden, reckless, violent, fierce, affectionate. Alcott thought no adjectives about him, but followed him to Nevada, and there lost his trail; there staked a claim and dug a pit, like other men, in search of the flecked ore; there fell in with a circuit-riding bishop, and began mak-

ing speeches to heavily armed miners. There he found his wrapped-up talent, his gift of moving men.

"You've got no beliefs that I can make head or tail of. Eccentric youth," said the hard-riding bishop, "go ahead!"

There he met T. M. Secor, that breezy money-maker and man of level horizons, who bore other resemblances to a prairie; who listened in astonishment to Alcott's torrent of extraordinary language, delivered in an ore shed from the tail of a dump cart.

"By gad, sonny, you can talk tall!" said T. M. S. "Want to bombard hell, do you? Got any idea where it is?"

"Yes."

"Ho! You have!"

"Some hot chunks of it in this town."

"You don't say! Look here! You come back to my place in Port Argent, and I'll build you a church. We'll raise a congregation or blow the roof off. What church are you, anyhow?"

"I'm no church. I'm a freak."

"Ho! You don't say!"

"I'm a voice in the wilderness crying: The kingdom of God is lost, strayed, and stolen. Help me find my brother."

But they did not find him.

Such was the outward story of Alcott Aidee.

But the outward story of a man is the wind-blown rippled surface of him. The current and true action are below. How can it be told? There was a love lying between two brothers, unreasoning and indomitable, which followed them up through their zig-zag careers, and left with the elder a burden and a bleeding sore. There was some maze of impulse, impatience, and remorse, out of whose dusky tangle it arose that Allen cut himself loose like a broken spar. Who shall pick the tangle apart? "Evil and good may be better or worse," but the "mixture of each is a marvel," says the penetrative poet. Why a marvel? Not from the strange-

ness of unuse, if they came so unmixed in the use and custom of things. Remorse there was, and irritated impatience, in Allen, no doubt.

"The Inner Republic," wrote Alcott afterwards in the grey volume of that title, "has this peril to its liberties, that love there tends to become a tyranny."

In Alcott's long thirst after knowledge, and his midnight studies, it is certain that something peculiar in his own nature lit the pages before him, with another light than that of his dim oil lamp. In the same grey volume, which troubled Henry Champney with premonitions, we read, near the beginning of Chapter XVIII., entitled "Light":

"Two lamps have mainly given me what light I have. I suppose many men, if not every man, has known them. One seemed to shine from overhead, a hanging flicker becoming a larger glow,—the Lamp of Knowledge. There are no better moments than when its flame leaps at the opening of a

new vista. The other has seemed to rise out of the deeps beneath me, out of anger and brooding and pain, and by it I hope to find my brother in my neighbour. Two lamps—the Lamp of Knowledge, and the Lamp of Sorrow."

So the Seton Avenue Hall was built, and thronged now with a shifting multitude. It was a time, a land, and a section of many an undenominated thing. Many a religious or social movement started up impulsively, and died on the spot without going beyond its seed bed. Some were hardier and more fertile, some curious, some famous, and some are with us still.

"Classifications of men are all false," declared Aidee. "Everyone is an elemental unit."

If he had a mind to be ignorant of whether he was clerical or not, and to care less, to be indifferent to all names that were applied to him, Port Argent had no call to be wiser. T. M. Secor was said to be backing the As-

sembly. In that case he would be apt to set up something in opposition next, and gamble on both sides. Aidee presently fell tooth and nail on local politics, and Port Argent saw a solution of the mystery.

"T. M.'s got a hawk-eye for excitement," it remarked, and went its way. Secor built the hall for Aidee, and built it handsomely. The Seton Avenue Assembly became an accepted element in the hurrying city. Port Argent concluded that Aidee was rather worth while. A black-eyed, pallid man it found him, concentrated, sharp, decided, with an instinct for rhetorical speech, a gift for vivid, understandable language. It counted him a definite object, a something ponderable. But off the platform it found him rather repellent.

The Assembly was an incorporated organisation, whose creed in early days had been Aidee's latest speech, whose activity in municipal politics started the Independent Reform Party; which party was backed by one

newspaper, *The Chronicle,* and sometimes elected a few councilmen, sometimes a good many. The cynical in Port Argent said that the Independent Reform Party was dying of indigestion, brought on by over-eating of a diet of too many ideas, too highly seasoned and disagreeing; that the Assembly was a sort of tintinabular tin can tied to a rapid and eloquent canine. The cynical perhaps overstated it. They generally do.

Of the throng which faced Aidee from week to week some faces became familiar, but most of them seemed to him indistinct and changing. He walked much about the city, watching faces—dingy and blurred faces, hurried and anxious faces, open and clear-eyed faces. "There's no equality among men, but there's a family likeness," he said. It grew to be a kind of emotional luxury, yet he made few friends among them. Personally, he was rather solitary. When he tested his feelings about other men by too much direct contact with them, they put him

out. He looked at them hungrily from a distance. Port Argent did not find him companionable. His solitude suited his temperament, but troubled his conscience.

Mrs. Tillotson found him the key to her social aspirations. Her aspirations sometimes drove him to think well of a tower of clamouring bells for a place of residence.

He fancied himself settled. Here was his work, his big brick hall with its platform, and opening off its narrow side entrance was his wide-windowed study. Here he would write his books and speak his mind, scatter his seed, and let the wind and sun take care of it. A man could do no more than throw his personality into the welter of things, and leave the worth of it to other decisions than his own. Here his travels were ended, except as one's soul travelled onward, spaceless and timeless.

In this spiritual kind of travelling he seemed ever to have moved by two concurrent roads, paths now rutted and worn, run-

ning into and overlapping each other. One of them was everywhere marked "Allen." Of the other, the Seton Avenue Assembly and the grey volume, "The Inner Republic," might be called signboards, or statements of condition. Even there might be noted the deep groove of the path marked "Allen," crossing and following the path of his convictions and interpretations, showing itself here and there in some touch of bitterness, some personal sense of the confusion and mockery of life, in a feeling for dishonoured humanity as if it were a personal dishonour, and so in a passionate championship of wrecked and aimless people. He spoke of them as if they were private and near. One champions kindred with little question of their deserts. This was part of the secret of Alcott's power on the platform. Over his success, as well as his failures, was written "Allen."

"Why do you go apart from me?" he asks in the grey volume. "Are you sensual,

thievish, violent, irresponsible? I am sensual, thievish, violent, irresponsible. If it troubles you that my coat is too new and my books too many, I will burn them and sit down in the gutter. It does not matter. Nothing matters except that you walk apart from me. For though I know that some effort one must make, somehow conspire to grasp this sorry scheme of things and remould it nearer to the heart's desire, yet I am no socialist. I know that the evil is not social, but human,—and I know not how I shall grasp it if we go apart."

The groove of the path marked "Allen" seems plain enough here. Allen, present, had wrecked his life more than once. Allen, lost, gave his speech the passion that gave it power. Mixed impatience and remorse drove Allen to cast himself loose, a broken spar, to disappear over the next wave. Alcott hungered and thirsted to find him again. Allen had ruined his career; and Allen had made for himself his career; there

was no jest in that irony. The coloured thread "Allen" was woven so thickly into the woof of his life that it tinged the whole pattern.

The day after the death of Wood Alcott passed through Bank Street and met Charlie Carroll, that valuable and spasmodic editor. Carroll glittered with malice.

"Say, that man's name was Hicks."

"What of it?"

"Why, he's one of your heelers."

"Don't know him."

"Didn't you ever see him? Well, Tom Berry knows him. He lived in Muscadine Street, over the river. Tom Berry says he used to sit 'way back under your gallery, curled up like a muskrat, eating his beard and drinking eloquence like raw brandy. Say, he looks like it."

"Do you think I recommended him to shoot Wood?"

"Well, not exactly."

"Been writing some buckshot paragraphs on me, then?"

Carroll shook his head.

"Don't know how it is. Down with the devil! Hicks, go shoot Wood! Never saw a man like you to make a general remark sound so blanked particular. No, but I'm going to soak you six to-morrow, you bet."

Carroll laughed and flitted away.

Aidee sat brooding and troubled in his study that afternoon. Nobody cared what Carroll said. Carroll could not hurt him. A man was not his brother's keeper any further than he could keep him. It was his business to do his best, and not cultivate an invalid conscience. Wood had been a likeable man. Whatever his qualities, he had a right to his life. Aidee had seen men drop and die in Nevada of sudden holes through the chest. If somebody from the Third Ward undertook to emphasize Carroll's paragraphs by applying a club to

Alcott Aidee, it would be no business of Carroll's either, whose business was with his paragraphs, and with seeing that they said what he meant, or that he meant what he caused them to say.

But the thing tasted badly.

He would see this Hicks, and discover at what point of discipleship a man translated "Down with the devil!" into "Go shoot Wood!" and became ready to take another's life and give over his own in exchange.

He stood at the window and saw Alberta Keys enter the Tillotson door, followed by Ted Secor, later by Ralbeck and Berry. They would be sipping Mrs. Tillotson's coffee presently, and discussing the Wood murder, and giving voluble opinions. They were driftwood people. Berry's "brotherly love" was a personal luxury he indulged himself with, a billowy divan that his soul reclined on. He had both brains and education, and played dolls with his sympathies. Ralbeck cursed the "Standard Oil" by way

of relaxation, his earnest business in this world being connected with thorough-bass. Mrs. Tillotson's pretence was only a little more evident. A lot of zig-zag waterflies! That poor muddy humanity which had no opinions, except they came directly out of its sins and pains, was better than these, whose opinions were their mental entertainments. And who were the bulk of those who listened to him weekly? What real men followed him now or believed in him utterly, except some poor madman like the murderer, Hicks? The masses of men in Port Argent did not care for him, Aidee. They liked Marve Wood better, and young Hennion. He knew of no one person in Port Argent who loved Alcott Aidee. The Assembly was a collection of the half-curious, the half-sincere, the half-educated, the drunken with a little philosophy; some driftwood from the churches, and a percentage of socialists from the shops, with opinions like Scotch plaids. What dedication was there in any of them?

What was there in them that was genuine, as a mother with her child is genuine, or a man at his set task and knowledge of instant need? It was one of Aidee's dark hours. The Wood murder was a jarring discord. One could not deny that.

Ah, there came times to every man, he thought, whatever his success, when he looked on his success with a dull dislike. He remembered one day in Nevada, when he had sat unnoticed hours on water-dribbled rocks on the edge of his claim—which was paying at that time—and felt the same mental nausea. Another time was at Allen's prison door in St. Louis.

Disillusion was no more rational than illusion. Sometimes the morning stars sang discordantly, and knew not why, any more than they knew why at other times their voices were effortless and sweet.

On that day of the water-dribbled rocks of Nevada, it was the loss of Allen which had caused the mood, and the thought that the

loss was final, and that the yellow fleck ore in the pit paid back no minutest percentage of the loss. Then the discovery that he could speak and move men had come, and brought with it the longing to move them to certain ends, and he had thought:

"All men are brothers. But some are lost and some are seeking. One is afraid and is condemned; one is not afraid and is called righteous; but neither of them can save himself alone; he can only do it because of the other. He can't do it without the other, for salvation is not the solitary issue they say it is. Salvation is a commonwealth. This is my message." Then he had lifted himself from the rocks and the ore pit, and had faith.

Now, if faith in his ends should fail, and the springs dry up! Faith and doubt were three-fourths irrational. Someone would be proving them bacteria. They passed from man to man—they floated in the air—one caught them from events and objects as one

caught the cholera—they were apt to be epidemic.

And yet faith in ends and purposes was health, and doubt of them disease. The one we must have, the other we must be rid of.

So ran Aidee's thoughts while he stood at the window and looked out gloomily at Seton Avenue, at its block pavement, and the shadows thrown by the pale young maple leaves. He saw nothing coming but a street car, a headlong rattling mechanism. He thought how all over Port Argent people were talking of the Wood murder—some gabbling about it like Mrs. Tillotson's guests, others saying, decently enough: "Wood always treated me right," or, "Well, the old scamp's gone!"

The Wood murder seemed an abrupt and challenging event thrust across his life—harsh, discordant, repellent, like that clanging mechanism in the street, which stopped, however, almost before Mrs. Tillotson's door, and Camilla Champney stepped down

from it. Aidee watched her enter the house, and then fell to pacing the floor restlessly. After half an hour he took his hat and went across the street to the Tillotson drawing-room.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Third Lamp

WHILE Aidee was looking gloomily from his study window on Seton Avenue, the Tillotson coterie were discussing the Wood murder.

"Splendid subject for a poem, Mrs. Tillotson!" cried Ralbeck. "I will put it in music, the schema thus—The wronged cry for justice! They rise! Staccato! Spare not! Fortissimo! Triumph! Victory! Allegro-mezzoforte!"

And Berry rumpled his hair and murmured: "Peace and coffee at Mrs. Tillotson's afterwards. Andante. It's rather nice."

And Mrs. Tillotson poured coffee from her patent coffee-pot, saying sternly that Mr. Aidee never countenanced crime; she could not bring herself either to countenance crime.

"This is important," she said. "We must take a position. We must insist to Mr. Aidee on a position." She drew herself up and paused. "People will ask our position."

Alberta opened her soft blue eyes widely. "Will you write a poem about Wood and Hicks, really?"

"My dear, what is your opinion?" Mrs. Tillotson asked.

"Scrumptious!" said Alberta.

Mrs. Tillotson hesitated.

"I will consult Mr. Aidee. The Assembly must take a position."

It was Mrs. Tillotson's latest theory that she was the power behind the throne. Genius must be supported, guided, controlled. She referred to Châteaubriand and Madame Récamier, a reference furnished her by Berry.

"Countenance crime!" cried Ralbeck. "Everybody countenances crime."

Alberta opened her eyes a shade wider.

"Except crimes of technique," Berry mur-

mured softly. "You don't countenance a man who sings off the key. Curious! I do."

"Art has laws," declared Mrs. Tillotson. "Society has laws. Crime is the breach of necessary laws."

"Necessary, Mrs. Tillotson! You touch the point." Berry stirred himself. "But we sing in tune or out of tune by nature; just so love and hate by nature. Or if we learn to love, or to sing in tune, it is by example, and not by fear or compulsion, that we learn. Most crimes are crimes of technique, the breach, not of natural laws, but of artificial laws. An unnecessary law is an initial crime. The breach of it is a consequent crime. 'Love one another' is the law most systematic, beautiful, inclusive. Really, all other laws than that are technical."

"G-gorry!" stammered Ted Secor. "Bu-but, you see, Hicks——"

"Did Hicks love Wood?" said Berry, and fixed on Teddy his glassy-eyed and smil-

ing stare. "He was wrong, Hicks was wrong."

"G-gorry, no! He didn't love Wood!"

Ted Secor found it hard work, this keeping one's gaze fixed on higher things, for the stars all seemed to be erratic stars. He was not clever himself; they were all cleverer here than he. He was nearly as idle as Berry, and more ignorant than Ralbeck, whose knowledge extra-musical was less than moderate; he was as useless as possible; his limbs were large and his head small; Mrs. Tillotson scared him; Alberta ordered and he obeyed; but he had decided instincts, and he knew that Berry was cleverer than Ralbeck, that Mrs. Tillotson posed, that Alberta carried himself around somehow in her diminutive pocket, and finally, that his own staying powers on the whole were rather good.

The trolley car clattered, and crashed past outside, and stopped, and Alberta, looking through the bow-window, cried:

"Camilla Champney! She's coming in!"

While Mrs. Tillotson flushed and saw visions. Camilla was not frequent and familiar in her drawing-room. She had been there but once or twice, and then nearly a year before.

When Aidee entered, Ralbeck, Mrs. Tillotson, and Berry were arguing eagerly on the subject of rituals, Camilla's thrilled and thrilling interest seeming to act like a draught on excitable coals. Mrs. Tillotson appealed to Aidee. Berry argued the softening effect of rituals; they tended to substitute non-combative forces and habits, he said, in the place of combative opinion; the Catholics were wise who substituted ecclesiasticism for theology; opinion was quarrelsome; hence followed anger and hate; a ritual represented order, therefore habit, therefore peace; it induced these qualities in character; he thought Mrs. Tillotson might compose a ritual for the As-

sembly. Ralbeck shouted his scorn. Mrs. Tillotson did not seem pleased with Ralbeck for his scorn.

Aidee left the house with Ted, Alberta, and Camilla. Presently Ted and Alberta turned north toward Herbert Avenue and the region of large houses and broad lawns, and Aidee and Camilla walked down Franklin Street. The crowds increased as they drew nearer the business section—late afternoon crowds hurrying home.

"I don't know how to say what I have to say, Miss Champney," he said stiffly, somewhat painfully.

"I thought you could say anything. That's your gift."

Camilla was radiant for a moment.

"It is about the other evening. I see it differently. I see that Mr. Hennion was right."

"Oh!" For another moment she was disdainful. "Women don't want to be men's conventions."

"Conventions! Berry would say that men are sermons and women rituals."

"Mr. Berry wouldn't have said that. He *couldn't!*" She was radiant again.

"Don't flatter me for coining epigrams. They're the small change of Mrs. Tillotson's drawing-room."

"But I like Alberta!"

She already felt the something discordant in Aidee's mood.

The increasing crowds broke the conversation. They turned to the left through the Court House Square, and passed the old jail with its barred windows and crumbling bricks. Sparrows fluttered and pecked in the wet young grass, sometimes lit on the sill of a barred window and looked into its black secrecy.

"Please don't be troubled about that, Mr. Aidee, because it doesn't matter, and besides—I don't know how to ask you—but there's something I want to find out. I don't

know exactly what it is. It's about 'The Inner Republic'!"

She was flushed, hurried, and embarrassed now.

"I thought it was different—from the other books—that is—I thought there was something in it besides what you wanted to prove."

"The book is more a confession than an argument, do you mean?"

"Not more, but besides."

"And that is what you want explained? You are perfectly right. A man ought not to spill his blood into a book. It looks smeared. Or else he ought to add explanatory notes. Oh, yes! the book! But the notes you ask for are extensive."

Camilla dropped her head, and they walked on silently.

They were come into a section of little wooden shanties. There were a few saloons with gilded signs, some grocery stores showing sodden and specked vegetables, and

empty spaces here and there, cavernous, weed-grown, and unsightly with refuse. The section was wedged in between the Lower Bank Street neighbourhood, where the well-to-do in Port Argent once builded their residences, and the upper part of the city, whither they had capriciously migrated since. The two noisy thoroughfares of Bank Street and Maple Street came together at one corner of it. A great red-brick ward schoolhouse was backed against an empty space, which was surrounded with a rickety board fence, and therein a few unhealthy trees were putting forth pale spring leaves. The still greater mass of a steepleless church thrust out its apse toward the same empty space.

Aidee had spoken out of the sick bitterness which he had already noted as unreasonable. Miss Champney, he thought, was only reasonable in asking for explanatory notes.

A bluebird on one of the feeble and stunted maples by the schoolhouse began to sing,

"Lulu-lu," pleading, liquid, and faint. A flabby woman at the door of one of the shanties bellowed hoarse threats at some quarrelling children.

Camilla lifted her face. Her eyes were wet, and her mouth trembling at the rebuff.

"I didn't think it would seem that way. I thought you might tell me—because you seemed to know, to understand about one's life—because I thought,—you seemed to know so well what I only guessed at. I didn't mean it as if it were nothing to me. I'm sorry."

Aidee stopped short, they stood in silence for some time by the old fence with its lichened boards enclosing the meagre maples and the grassless space within, where the bluebird's young spring song floated above, "Lulu-lu," tender and unfinished, as if at that point the sweetness and pain of its thought could only be hinted at by the little wistful silence to follow. Doubtless, among the maple leaves, too, there are difficulties

of expression, imprisoned meanings that peer out of dark windows, and the songsters are afraid of singing something that will not be answered in the same key. They sing a few notes wistfully and listen. They flutter about the branches, and think each other's hesitations bewildering. It happens every spring with them, when the maple buds unfold, when April breaks into smiles and tears at the discovery of her own delicate warmth, and the earth feels its myriad arteries throbbing faintly.

Camilla was about to turn to go on, but he stopped her.

"I won't say that I didn't mean that," he said. "I did. I'm not sorry. Otherwise I couldn't have understood you."

"I shall make a circus of myself," he thought. "But she'll look as if she thought it a solemn ceremony. Women can do that. They don't have to believe. And perhaps she would understand."

"Lulu-lu," sang the bluebird plaintively,

seeming to say, "Don't you understand? This is what I mean."

"But you do understand now!" said Camilla.

"Yes. I've been moody to-day, and sick of my life here. It was the Wood murder. If I were writing another book now, the smear of the Wood murder would be on it at this point. It would compose an explanatory note. You asked for explanations of my book, and where we have bled we are sore. Well, then, I had a younger brother once, and we loved each other like two rank young wolves, and hung hard together by ourselves some twenty years, and were ragged together, and hungry and cold sometimes. I dragged him out of the gutter and prison, he wrecked me more than once. Then he left me and sank himself somewhere. I don't know if he is dead or alive. He was a thief and a drunkard off and on, and a better man than I in several ways, and more of a fanatic, and very lovable. It tore me in two.

I'd give ten years to grip his hand again. Is that curious? I've been a schoolmaster and a newspaper editor, day laborer, truck driver, and miner. Now I'm the exponent of an idea. Sometimes I've worked like a dray horse all day and studied all night. Sometimes I've been happy. Sometimes I've had an extraordinary desire to be dead. Do you see about those explanatory notes? Do you think they would help you any? The reviews say my book is morbid, over-emotional. Some of them say it's hysteric."

"I think you're a wonderful man." She looked up with glowing and frank admiration.

The bluebird flitted past them from one scrubby tree to another, crying softly. The schoolhouse stared down upon them blankly, with its thirty unspeculative back windows. The flabby woman sat down on her porch and folded her fat hands. The turbulent children poked in the refuse heaps and grew im-

perceptibly dirtier. A factory whistle blew. A nearby street grew noisier with the outpouring of workmen. Aidee leaned against the fence and looked at the thirty windows as if he saw speculation in them.

"Wonderful! No! But you are wonderful, Miss Champney. Wherever you come you bring hope. You have more sympathies than an April day. You are the genius of the spring. The bluebirds are singing to you. You tempt me to be happy. You set me to poetising against the back windows of a schoolhouse where a hundred and fifty innocents are bored to death every day. Tell me your secret, and I'll cure the world. It's sick of an old disease. Old! Some say eternal. But it feels pretty well sometimes, in the spring, or because women are good and beautiful, and tell us that it is impossible not to hope. They seem to tell us to dream on, till we've outdreamed the wrong and so found the right. Wonderful? You are wonderful. The hope of the world

looks out of your eyes. I owe you a debt. I owe it to tell you whatever you want to know. I'm as flattered and foolish as you like."

Camilla laughed happily.

"Then I shall have to ask questions. For instance, I want to know what you think about the man who shot Mr. Wood."

He glowered a little.

"Could I say without seeing him? But you mean about what he did. I think a man's life belongs to him and shouldn't be stolen. I don't like thievery of any kind. I've been trying to show people that men like Wood were disguised thieves, more or less disguised from themselves. I suppose Hicks is no less a murderer because the thing appeared to him in the disguise of a cause. I don't know. They call him so. Murder is illegal killing. They'll probably put him to death, and that will be legal killing. They'll think their motive is good. The motives of the two killings are not so different. Hicks

thought his motive was good. I think no man has a right to kill another, legally or illegally. I don't care for the laws. I'd as lief break them as not. They are codified habits, some of them bad habits. Half the laws are crimes against better laws. You can break all the Ten Commandments with perfect legality. The laws allow you to kill and steal under prescribed conditions. Wood stole, and Hicks killed, and most men lie, though only now and then illegally. It's all villainous casuistry. Taking life that doesn't belong to you is worse than taking money that doesn't belong to you, because it's the breach of a better ownership. But Hicks' motive seems better than Wood's. How can one measure the length and breadth of sin? Wood seemed to me more of a thief than most who are in jail, because I felt clearer as to the rights of public property than as to the rights of private property. But I found him a very human man. Hicks is probably no less so. Wood was a likeable

man too. There is no criminal class, no corrupt politician class. There are no classes of any kind. I mean to say the classification hinders more truth than it helps. Do you understand me? I'm not a systematic thinker. Shall I confess, Miss Champney? One talks confidently about right and wrong in public. In secret he confesses that he never saw them apart. I confess it to you, that I don't know how they would look apart."

Camilla felt thrilled. It was the word "secret," perhaps, or, "confession." Or more with the sense of being present at the performance of a mystery, when a great man, as she thought him—a man new, at least, and original—conceived, created, shaped his thoughts before her, and held them out for her to see. The great men of history, the statesmen, poets, reformers, were vivid to her, to be read and to be read about. Some of them her father had known. They were the subjects of long

morning talks in the tall-windowed library. She had a halo ready for any deserving head. She had a halo fitted on Alcott Aidee's, and he was conversationally doffing it, a celestial performance that set her cheeks to flying signals of excitement.

Aidee was basking in a vague sense of pleasantness, his sick moodiness soothed away. What did it matter if one had work to do? How noble and lovely and sweet was Camilla Champney!

"The man who first invented women," he went on more slowly, "must have been a lyric poet."

He caught sight of the huge woman on the porch of the shanty, who now rose and bobbed to him vigorously. Aidee returned the salute. Camilla choked a laugh, and Aidee grinned in sympathy, and all seemed well, with a bluebird, the moist April weather, and the cheerful noise of the surrounding streets, and the coming on of sunset. They turned and walked up the slight

hill, past the big steepleless church, to Maple Street.

"No, she's not lyric," he said. "She's epic. Her name is Mrs. Finney. I've forgotten how I happen to know. Oh, yes! She and her husband fight, but she always thrashes him."

"How dreadful!"

"Is it? But it's good for him to know where he stands in the scheme of things. His hopefulness is wonderful, and then the knowledge that she can do it is part of her contentment. Do you suppose we could get Tom Berry to admit that a combativeness which had a regular recurrence and a foregone conclusion, like the Finneys', might come to have the qualities and benefits of a ritual? It would be a nice question for Mrs. Tillotson's drawing-room."

"He talks as he writes!" thought Camilla, marvelling, too interested in marvelling to question if the man could be analysed, and some things found not altogether wor-

shipful—egotisms, perhaps inconsistencies, weaknesses, and tyrannies. Capable of earnestness he was, surely beyond most men; capable of sarcasm and laughter. Camilla was occupied in getting the spirit of the grey volume properly incarnated in the man walking beside her, a slender man, tirelessly energetic, whose black, restless eyes glanced under bony brows so intently at whatever for the moment met them, whose talk was so brilliant and electric. This brother whom he was describing so frankly seemed to have behaved more than doubtfully. But Alcott's frank description of his brother and his close love of him both were so clear, and his frankness and his love each seemed to Camilla the more beautiful for the other.

The Arcadian age is not only an age of surprises. It is above all an age of images. All ideas then make haste to shape themselves into persons, into living objects, however vast and vague. In the farthest inland

Arcadia, hard by the sources and fountain heads of streams, where everyone has once lived, what unhesitating outstretchings there were, what innocent anthropomorphisms! In our dreams God came into the window and kissed us at night with sweet, fiery lips, as realistic a visitation as ever came to Psyche or Endymion, and the soul swelled up like a balloon, and was iridescent as a soap bubble. Everything was a person then.

Camilla had still the habit. A face and a voice came to her out of every book. She had already a close acquaintance with a surprising person in the grey volume, one who had varying tones and features, who seemed to reason so closely, so trenchantly, and again to be but a lost and longing petitioner; one who sometimes bitterly denounced, but sometimes spoke humorously and pleasantly enough. A feverish spirit, yet as it seemed to her, beautiful, earnest, daring, searching, and like a ship carrying a mysterious

force and fearless prow. She had but pictures and impressions of these things. She was slowly identifying them now with the restless-eyed Aidee, and felt peculiarly happy. How beautiful it seemed that spring had come, and the first bluebird was singing! The impish children on the refuse heaps shouted gleefully. A silky spring haze was in the air, as if risen out of the valleys of Arcadia.

Maple Street was thronged, and mainly with foreign-looking faces, German and Italian, some Jewish, a few Chinese and Negro. Lower Bank Street seemed comparatively quiet and deserted. Black-hulled freight boats, cumbersome monsters, slept at their docks. The glimmer of the white sail of a yacht could be seen far down the river beyond the bridges.

"Cheerful old river!" Aidee remarked.

"I love it."

"Reason enough for its cheerfulness."

"I've loved it for ages."

"But you needn't dodge a tribute," said Aidee.

"You needn't insist on it."

"Not if I think it important?"

"Oh, never at all!"

"But a tribute! You might take what belongs to you. I owe you a debt."

"Better owe it than pay it in small coin."

"Then I offer a promissory note."

"You mean—you will tell me more about——" Camilla paused and dropped her voice.

"Whatever you may ask. It's the kind called payable on demand."

It has ever been noticed, at some point, sooner or later, probably in the springtime, the conversations in Arcadia become singularly light, and small tinklings of wit are thought poetical.

Opposite the P. and N. station were the gangs of Hennion's workmen. The paving job was nearly finished. But something was wrong. The men stood idle. Hennion

had his back against a telegraph pole, and talked to Kennedy, as Aidee and Camilla came up behind him.

"Rip it out again, Kennedy," he said. "Can't help it."

"'Twill cost the best part of a day," said the big foreman ruefully.

"Can't help it."

Kennedy swore stealthily but solidly, and Hennion laughed.

"I'll pay the damages if you'll do the growling. That's all right."

He turned and met Camilla and Aidee, and the three walked toward the Champney house. Camilla asked imperative questions.

"What is it, Dick? What have you done?"

Hennion glanced at Aidee and thought of their late stormy tilting.

"Oh, I was away to-day, and Kennedy saw the chance to make a blunder with his sand layer. He thinks it won't make much difference, if we forget about it. He's an

ingenious arguer. But I hate sloppy work."

Aidee said nothing. The two men stopped at the Champney gate. Camilla went up the path with her swift, springy step. They turned back to the gangs of workmen.

"You were right about that, the other night," said Aidee abruptly. "I'm not quite clear how you were right, but you were."

"Right about the whole business?"

"No, only about my method. I'm still urging you to go in, but I'm adopting your scruples."

Hennion shook his head thoughtfully. Aidee went on.

"Political power is safest in the hands of those who have to make a sacrifice in order to accept it." Then he stopped with a short laugh. "I'm a coiner of phrases. It's inveterate. Maxims don't interest you. Would it be any argument for your going in if I engaged to stay out?"

"Why, hardly. I don't know. I don't make you out."

"Carroll's going to explain me in six paragraphs to-morrow."

"Carroll doesn't amount to anything. Did you know Hicks at all?" implying that he knew what the paragraphs would be.

"Never saw him that I know of."

"Well—I don't see where you're concerned."

Hennion went out into the street among his workmen. He wondered what Aidee meant by "adopting your scruples." Probably Aidee saw the enormity of dragging in Camilla. It was time he did. Hennion did not find himself liking Aidee any better for his candour, or advice, or conscientious scruples, if he had them. He thought his own scruples about Camilla were not things to be copied or "adopted" precisely by anyone else.

Aidee went back by the schoolhouse. He thought he would like to hear the bluebird

again, on the spot where his bitterness and the wound within him had been suddenly healed by some medicine as irrational as the disease, but the twilight had fallen now, and there was no song about the place. Mrs. Finney and her "man" were quarrelling noisily at their open window.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Mechanics

HENNION came back from seeing Wood laid away (where other men were lying, who had been spoken of in their day, whom Port Argent had forgotten or was in process of forgetting) and saw the last bricks laid and rammed on Lower Bank Street. There was satisfaction in the pavement of Lower Bank Street, in knowing what was in it and why. The qualities of sand, crushed stone, and paving brick were the same yesterday and to-day. Each brick was three inches and three-eighths thick, and not one would be ambitious of four inches to-morrow. If it were broken, and thrown away, there would be no altruistic compunctions. One built effectively with such things.

Charlie Carroll whispered to Hennion as they came out of the cemetery:

"It's all right. The boys are satisfied."

"Why are they?"

"They'd be scared not to do what Wood said now. It wouldn't go down."

"Go down where?"

"Well, they seem to like the idea too. They will have it."

But why should he be congratulated over a prospective invitation from "the boys" to labour in their interests? He was not sure why he had not already refused, by what subconscious motive or scruple. Properly there should be scruples about accepting. The leadership of the organisation was an unsalaried position, with vague perquisites. Wood had taken honorariums and contributions, spent what he chose on the organisation, and kept what he chose. Apparently he had not kept much, if any. He had seemed to care only for influence. He had liked the game. He had left only a small

estate. But whether he had kept or passed it on, the money was called unclean.

If one went into politics to effect something—and Hennion could not imagine why one went into anything otherwise—the leadership of the organisation seemed to be the effective point. The city had a set of chartered machinery, ineffectually chartered to run itself; also certain subsets of unchartered machinery. It voted now and then which of the subsets should be allowed to slip on its belt. The manner in which the chartered machinery was run depended somewhat on the expedients that were needed to keep the unchartered machinery going. There must be dynamics and mechanics in all that machinery. To an engineer's criticism it seemed oddly complicated. There must be a big waste. But almost any machine, turning heat force into motion, wasted sixty per cent. Still these sets and subsets seemed loosely geared. It looked like an interesting problem in en-

gineering, that had been met rather experimentally. As mechanics, it seemed to be all in an experimental stage. Hennion wondered if there were any text-books on the subject, and then pulled himself up with a protest.

What did politics want of an engineer and a business man? As an engineer and a business man, he had been asking something of politics, to be sure, but he had only asked it in the way of business. In his father's time politics had called for lawyers. Nowadays lawyers too were mainly a class of business men. If political machinery had any dynamic and mechanic laws, they must be original. Those who succeeded in running it seemed to succeed by a kind of amateur, hand-to-mouth common sense.

Wood had been an interesting man. After all, he might have been as important in his way as Henry Champney had been. If you were talking of the dynamics of politics, you were estimating men as forces.

The amount and direction were a good deal matters of guess. Wood had thought Hennion's father a better man for results than Champney.

Wood himself had been a man for results, with some impersonal ambitions for Port Argent. He had known it better than almost anyone else, more of its details and different aspects, from the wharves to Seton Avenue. Those who criticised him generally had seemed hampered by knowing less about the matter than he did. They fell back on principles, and called him corrupt, which meant that, if the unchartered machinery needed fuel, the chartered machinery was set to turning out some bit of legislation to suit those who furnished the fuel. Hennion thought the prosperity of Port Argent had always been a motive with Wood. Only it was a complicated motive, half private, hardly confessed.

Hennion entered another protest against the direction of his thoughts, and noticed

the big foreman, Kennedy, close beside him. The workmen were gathering their tools.

"All right, Kennedy. Come around to-morrow. We'll begin that grading on the east side next."

Kennedy looked after him wistfully, and the workmen stood still, holding their tools and looking after him. He noticed it as he turned away, and it occurred to him to wonder how it happened that he knew so many men like Kennedy, who seemed to have a sort of feudal attachment for him.

He passed through Tecumseh Street on his way home, and noticed where the policeman had ripped off the advertising boards. Hicks must be a queer specimen, he thought. But relatively to mechanics, every man was an eccentric.

Tecumseh Street was absorbed in its daily business. It seemed to have no conscience-smitten, excited memories. A mob and a flash of gunpowder, a runaway horse, the

breaking down of a truck, everything went the way of incident. "Everything goes," was the phrase there, meaning it is accepted and goes away, for the street has not time to remember it.

Hennion glanced up at the window of the little room in *The Press* building. Why had Wood chosen an engineer and contractor to make of him a machine politician? Machinery made of men, with the notions of men to drive it—what kind of machinery was that to work with! Aidee, the enthusiast, was a man! Hicks, the mad, was another; Freiburger, the mollusk, another. Wood, with his complicated sympathies and tolerances and hand-to-mouth flexible common sense, was a specially developed type to run that kind of machinery. Wood was dead, and as for his "job," and what "the boys" wanted, why, they wanted *their* "jobs," like everybody else. Hennion wanted his own.

Carroll came flitting around the corner

of Hancock Street at that moment, and nearly ran into him.

"Oh! Committee meets to-morrow night."

"I don't want it."

"Come off! You can't help it."

Carroll flitted away in the direction of *The Press* building.

Before seven o'clock the sparrows in the dark maples were forgetting in sleep all the great issues of their day.

Hennion left his rooms, in the apartment building that was splendidly called "The Versailles," and came out in the street. It was too early to see Camilla. He walked a few blocks north, and turned down Maple Street presently, past St. Catherine's Church, and Freiburger's saloon across the street from the church. They were the seats of the two rulers of the Fourth Ward, church and state—Father Harra and Freiburger.

Maple Street instead of tumbling down the bluff like other streets, to be chopped off short at the wharves, seems to lift itself there with a sense of power beneath, becomes a victory and a spirit, and so floats out over the brown Muscadine. The bridge was always to Hennion more like his father than the canal or the C. V. Railroad. The railroad was a financial cripple now, absorbed in a system. The great day of the canal was long past. The elder Hennion had seemed a soul for daring and success, and that was the bridge. It stood to Hennion for a memorial, and for the symbol of his father's life and his own hope in the working world. He liked to stand on it, to feel it beneath and around him, knowing what each steel girder meant, and what in figures was the strength of its grip and pull. There was no emotional human nature in it, no need of compromise. Steel was steel, and stone stone, and not a bolt or strand of wire had any prejudice or private folly. In

a certain way he seemed to find his father there, and to be able to go over with him their old vivid talks.

The Muscadine reflected up at him, out of its brown turbulence, shattered fragments of the moon and stars. A quavering voice spoke in his ear: "Got a light?"

Besides himself and the inebriate, who held up by the nearest girder, there was only one other person on the bridge, a small, thin figure, creeping from the distance toward them in the moonlight, a half-grown child, who leaned her shoulders to one side to balance a basket on the other.

"Pretty full, Jimmy Shays," Hennion said, giving him a match. "You'd float all right if you fell into the river."

"Tha'sh right, tha'sh right! I drinks to pervent accerdents, myself."

He lit the match, seemed to gather the idea that he had succeeded with the pipe, and sucked at it imaginatively; then started suddenly for the basket girl. "Hi!"

The child stopped and looked at him.

"I gets one end. Tha'sh right."

She accepted the offer with matter-of-fact gravity, and they moved away over the bridge unsteadily. The glamour of the moon was around them. Hennion heard Shays lift his voice into husky resemblance of a song.

A queer world, with its futilities like Shays, its sad little creeping creatures like the basket girl!

Down the river some distance was the P. and N. Railroad bridge. The west-bound train shot out upon it, a sudden yell, a pursuing rumble, a moving line of lit windows.

Whatever one did, taking pride in it purely as a work, as victory and solution, it was always done at last for the sake of men and women. The west-bound passenger train was the foremost of effectual things. It ran as accurately to its aims in the dark as in the light, with a rhythm of smooth machinery, over spider-web bridges. Com-

pared with the train, the people aboard it were ineffectual. Most of them had—but mixed ideas of their purposes there. But if no passengers had been aboard, the west-bound train would have been a silly affair.

Hennion came from the bridge and down Bank Street, which was brilliant with lights. He turned up an outrunning street and came out on the square, where stood Port Argent's city hall and court house and jail, where there was a fountain that sometimes ran, and beds of trimmed foliage plants arranged in misguided colour-designs.

Several lights were burning in the barred windows of the old jail. He stopped and looked at the lights, and wondered what varieties of human beings were there. The jail was another structure which would have been futile without people to go in, at least to dislike going in. The man who shot Wood was there. Why did he shoot Wood? What was his futile idea in that?

The jail was old and dilapidated. Some

of the bricks had crumbled under the barred windows.

Hennion walked into the entrance, and rang the bell.

The jailor was middle-aged, bearded, and smoking a short pipe.

"Can I see Hicks, Sweeney?"

"Got a permit? Oh! Mr. Hennion! Well, it ain't regular, you know."

"You can stay by."

"Well, all right. No, but I'll have to lock you in. It's the rules."

They went up a flight of dark stairs, through a corridor, where a watchman passed them. They stopped at a door, and the jailor turned the key.

"Hicks, gentleman to see you."

## CHAPTER IX

### Hicks

HICKS was sitting within by a plain board table, reading. It was a white-washed room and had a window with rusted bars. The door banged, and the key again creaked in the lock. The jailor walked to and fro in the corridor.

Hicks looked up from his reading, and stared in a half-comprehending way.

"I have a selfish thirst for knowledge, Mr. Hicks," said Hennion.

He took the chair on the opposite side, and looked at the book on the table. The feeble gas jet stood some six inches out from the wall, directly over the table.

"It's the Bible," said the other. "It needs to be made modern, but there's knowledge in it."

"I didn't mean that."

"Lazarus and Dives. That's fanciful

justice. A trick to pacify Lazarus. But there's knowledge. Notice what the dogs did. That's satire."

It seemed a trifle uncanny, the place, the little man with the absorbed manner, metallic voice and strange language, black hair and beard, intent black eyes. Hennion had never interviewed a criminal before.

"I'm not a reporter, Mr. Hicks, nor a lawyer."

Hicks marked his place and closed the book.

"I know who you are."

"I was a friend of Wood's, in a way, but I'm not here in malice. I gathered you hadn't anything personal against him. It seemed to follow you had some sort of a long-range motive in it. I wanted to ask you why you shot Wood."

Hicks' gaze grew slowly in intentness as if his mind were gathering behind it, concentrating its power on one point. The point seemed to be midway between and

above Hennion's eyes. Hennion had an impulse to put his hand to the spot, as if it were burnt, but his habit of impassiveness prevented. He thought the gaze might represent the way in which Hicks' mind worked. A focussing mind was a good thing for anyone who worked with his brains, but it might have extravagances. An analysis concentrated and confined to an infinitely small point in the centre of the forehead might make an infinitely small hole to the back of the head, but it would not comprehend a whole character. A man's character ran to the ends of his hands and feet.

"I'm an engineer," Hennion went on, "and in that way I have to know the effectiveness of things I handle and apply. And in that way men too are to me so much effectiveness."

"I know about you," said Hicks sharply. "Your men like you. You've never had a strike."

"Why—no."

Hicks' manner had changed. It was quick, excited, and angular.

"You're wrong. They're something more to you, that you didn't count in. Why do they like you?"

"I don't know."

"Exactly. But it's something effective, ain't it?"

Hennion paused and felt confused. A man of such sharp analysis and warped performance as this, how was one to get to understand him? He leaned back in his chair and crossed his knees. The sharp analysis might be a trick Hicks had caught from listening to Aidee's speeches. It sounded like Aidee.

"Well, anyhow, Mr. Hicks, in the way of effectiveness, why did you shoot Wood?"

Hicks' eyes were little pin-points of concentration.

"He sold the people to the corporations."

"Well. But suppose he did. Will the

next man do any better? If not, where's the effectiveness?"

"He won't be so sharp."

"You thought Wood was too sharp to be downed Aidee's way?"

"He was the devil's latest scheme. I sent him to the devil."

"And shoulder the consequences. I like that. But the next man. Suppose I were the next man."

Hicks' teeth clicked together. His hands moved across the table. They were thin and claw-like, and the nails scratched the boards. He said softly:

"Look out what you do."

"What shall I do? I'm looking around for advice. Does it seem queer if I ask some of you?"

Hennion felt brutally master of the situation. There seemed something unfair in his greater size, his colder nerves and more untroubled brain, unfair to the little man opposite, with his hot impulses, his sad and

sordid tragedy. Hennion felt so much at ease as to wonder why he did not feel more repulsion for Wood's murderer, and consoled himself by thinking Wood himself had been tolerant of hostilities and extremities, and would probably feel no repulsion for Hicks. Perhaps the key to Hicks was that he was created without tolerance. He was made up of intense convictions and repulsions and inflamed nerves. Whatever goal his purpose fixed on would become a white-hot point, blinding him to circumstances. And this focussing nature, which acted like a lens to contract general heat into a point of fire, was a natural phenomenon in dynamics. It seemed a characteristic of better service for starting a fire, and furnishing the first impulse of a social movement, than for running steady machinery. Some people claimed that society was running down and needed a new impulse. If so, it needed the Hicks type. If not, the trouble with Hicks might be that he was a phenom-

enon occurring at the wrong time, a fire that had to be put out.

"You ask me!"

"Then it does seem queer? But I ask it. Could a man be a party boss, and satisfy you?"

Hicks' gaze was now troubled and wild, as if he were trying to find the centre of the conception with his focus, and could not; as if the attempt to look at the conception with other than a set hostility was to break up the organisation of his mind. He drew back, his finger nails scratching across the table, and hid his face. Hennion rose.

"I beg your pardon."

"You ask me!"

"Well, I don't think your method is the right one. If a clock's out of order, I don't think shooting into it is the right method. I dare say it expresses the way a man feels, but I don't see that it mends the clock. But if I were undertaking to mend it, and didn't know any too much about it, I might like to

ask the man that was for shooting what his idea was. I told you I had a selfish thirst for knowledge. Under the circumstances, I beg your pardon."

"Why do you ask me?" Hicks' fingers shook on the table. "There's a man who can tell you. He can lead you. He led me, when I wasn't a fool."

"Who? You mean Aidee?"

Hicks nodded, and fell to glowering at his nervous fingers, absent and brooding.

"He didn't tell you to shoot Wood. I know better than that."

"No, he didn't."

"Why, there's another thing I'd like to know. What did Aidee do?"

"Do! He held me back! He was always holding me back! I couldn't stand it!" he cried sharply, and a flash of anger and impatience went over his face. "He shouldered me like a log of wood on his back. Maybe I liked that papoose arrangement, with a smothered damn fire in the

heart of me. No, I didn't! I had to break loose or turn charcoal."

Hennion wondered. The man reminded him of Aidee, the same vivid phrase, the figures of speech. But Aidee had said that he did not know him. It appeared that he must know him. If Aidee had been lying about it, that opened sinister suggestions. Hennion did not like Aidee, neither did he like in himself this furtive sense of satisfaction in the suggestions.

"Aidee told me he didn't know you. I hadn't thought he would lie about it."

"By God, don't call him a liar to me!"

Hicks jumped to his feet, and had his wooden chair swung over his back in an instant.

"I don't. I want it explained," Hennion said coolly. "You can't do anything with that. Sit down."

"He's the only man alive that dares tell the truth. You're all hounds, cowards, thieves! He's a saint in hell!"

"Likely enough. You're a hot disciple. Still, I'm waiting for an explanation."

"Don't you call him a liar!"

"Haven't. Sit down."

Hicks sat down, his thin hands shaking painfully. His eyes were narrowed, glittering and suspicious. Hennion tipped his chair back, put his hands into his pockets, and looked at the weak, flickering gas jet, and the ripples of light and shadow that crossed the whitewashed ceiling. They were wild, disordered, and fugitive, as if reflections from the spirit behind Hicks' eyes, instead of from the jet at the end of a lead pipe.

"I'll help you out with a suggestion," Hennion said slowly. "You don't mean to leave Aidee in that shape, since you feel about him in this way. But you don't know whether your story would go down with me, or whether it might not get Aidee into trouble. Now, if I'm forecasting that story,

it's something like this. You knew each other years ago, not in Port Argent."

Hicks said nothing.

"Carried you around papoose-fashion, did he? But there's some likeness between you. It might happen to be a family likeness."

Still no comment.

"If it so happened, you might be related. You might be twins. And then again you might not. You might have been his first convert. Partners maybe in Nevada. That was where he came from,—silver mines and what not. It's no business of mine."

He paused and meditated, looking at the pulsating light; then brought his chair down and leaned forward.

"I take the liberty to disagree with you. I'm no exception to the run of men, and I'm neither a hound, nor a coward, nor a thief, nor yet a liar."

"I know you're not."

"However, your story, or Aidee's, is no business of mine. I gave you those infer-

ences because they occurred to me. Naturally you'd suspect they would. So they do. Gabbling them abroad might make some trouble for Aidee, that's true. I shan't gabble them."

"I know you won't."

"I wanted your point of view in shooting Wood. If you don't see your way to give it, all right. I judge it was the same way you were going to club me with a chair. Simple enough and rather silly. Good-night, then. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes."

Hennion leaned back and studied the gaslight, and disliked himself. Hicks clasped and unclasped his hands on the table.

"It won't hurt him," he said hoarsely, "between you and me. Besides, you can do that for me. He's my brother, old Al. But I cut away from him. I kept off. I kept away from him for a while, but I couldn't live without seeing him. You see? I

couldn't do it. Then he came here, and I followed him, and I lived with a shoemaker across the river and cobbled shoes. But I heard every speech he made in Port Argent, though he never saw me. He thinks I'm dead, don't he? I dodged him pretty slick." He flushed and smiled—"I liked it," he whispered, growing excited. "It was better 'n the old way, for we got along all right this way. You've heard of him! Ain't he wonderful? Ain't he a great one, hey? That was Al. I liked it, but he didn't know. You see? How'd he know when he thought I was dead, didn't he? I watched him, old Al!"

His face was lit up with the warm memory of it. He clicked his teeth, and swayed to and fro, smiling.

"We got along all right this way. All right. My idea. Wasn't Al's. I kept the other side the river, mostly. Nobody can touch him when he's fired up, can they? They didn't know Al like I knew him. They

called him the Preacher. He scared 'em like prairie fire. He's got his way. I've heard him. I watched 'em, and I knew him, but they didn't, did they?"

He focussed his excited eyes suddenly on Hennion.

"You! I know you; I know your men that live on the east side. I heard a man say you'd got a heart like a baked potato and don't know it. That fat-headed foreman of yours, Kennedy, he can tell you more 'n you ever thought of. Think you're a composite of steel and brick, set up according to laws of mechanics, don't you? Oh, hell! Go and ask Al. He's a wonder. Why do your men like you? Go and ask 'em. I've told you why. Why'd I shoot Wood? Al wouldn't have let me, but it 'll do good. He scares 'em his way, I scare 'em mine. You wait and see! It 'll do good."

Hennion studied the gas jet, until he could see nothing but an isolated impish dancing flame, until it seemed as if either the little

man across the table were chattering far away in the distance and darkness, or else he and the gas jet were one and the same.

Aidee had been four years in Port Argent, and so Hicks had been following and watching him, cobbling shoes, living a fanciful, excited life, maniacal more or less. Hennion fancied that he had Hicks' point of view now.

"You wait and see! It 'll do good."

"Well," said Hennion, "I dare say you've answered the question. You haven't told me yet what I can do for you."

Hicks' excitement died out as suddenly as it had risen. He reached a trembling hand across the table, and whispered:

"I thought—— What do you think they'll do to me?"

"I can't help you there. You'll have counsel."

"No, no! It's this. I thought I'd write a letter to Al, and you'd give it to him after-

wards, a year afterwards—supposing—you see?"

He hesitated pitifully.

"All right, I'll do that."

"I won't write it now."

"I see."

"You'll keep it still? You won't tell? You won't get a grudge against Al? If you do! No. I know about you. You won't tell."

"No, I won't. Well, good-night, then."

"Good-night."

His voice was husky and weak now. He put out his hand, hesitating. Hennion took it promptly. It felt like a wet, withered leaf.

Hennion went and knocked at the door, which Sweeney opened. Hicks sat still by the table, looking down, straggling locks of his black hair plastered wet against his white forehead, his finger nails scratching the boards.

The door clanged to, and the noise echoed in the corridor.

"I heerd him gettin' some excited," said the jailor.

"Some."

"Think he's crazy?"

"That's for the court to say."

"Ain't crazier 'n this old jail. I need a new one bad, Mr. Hennion. Look at them windows! I seen mighty clever boys here. A sharp one could dig out here some night, if he had the tools."

"Then you'd better not suggest it to Hicks."

"Ho! He ain't thinkin' of it. He's a weakly man."

"No, probably not."

"He ain't got the tools, either. I know the business. Look at the experience I've had! But I need a new jail, Mr. Hennion, bad, as I told Mr. Wood."

"Better write out a statement of the case. Good-night. Much obliged for your trouble."

The jailor talked busily till they came to

the outer door. Hennion broke away, and left him in the doorway smoking his short pipe.

He came presently to sit in the tall Champney library, and heard Henry Champney speaking in that tone and accent which made an ordinary remark sound like one of the Ten Commandments. Camilla was silent.

"Do you then, ha! cross the Rubicon?" Champney asked.

"Wood's organisation, sir? Carroll and the city jailor both seem to think it a foregone conclusion. Sweeney thinks if one of his 'boys' had a crowbar, or chisel, or a pair of tongs, he'd return to the community; so he wants a new jail, thinking it might include a new salary."

## CHAPTER X

### Macclesfield's Bridge

HENNION knew Wood's organisation intimately enough. He had been a part of it on the outside. Wood had been chairman of the "General Committee," a body that had total charge of the party's municipal campaigns, including admission to caucuses, and local charge in its general campaigns. Local nominations were decided there. It was only less active between elections than during them. It had an inner ring which met by habit, socially, in Wood's office. Whatever was decided in Wood's office, it was understood, would pass the Committee, and whatever passed the Committee would pass the City Council, and be welcomed by a mayor who had been socially at the birth of the said measure. Port Argent was a ring-led city, but it claimed to

have a better ring than ordinary. Probably it had. Probably this was due in the main to something peculiar in Wood.

Hennion's election to the chairmanship was followed by a meeting in his office that forced a sudden investment in chairs. It was Thursday. Carroll was there; Mayor Beckett, a neatly dressed man with a long neck and close-trimmed black beard, talkative, casuistical, a lawyer by profession; Ranald Cam, President of the Council, solid, grim, rugged, devoid of grammar, grown grey in the game of politics, and for some reason unmatched in his devotion to Wood's memory; John Murphy, saloon-keeper from East Argent, not now in any office, an over-barbered, plastered, and gummy-looking person, boisterous and genial; J. M. Tait, small, thin, dry, of bloodless complexion, sandy hair, and infrequent speech, a lawyer, supposed to represent corporate interests; Major Jay Tuttle, President of the School Board, white-moustached and pompous.

Port Argent's school system was thought too military by the teachers who suffered under it. The Major stood high among Masons and G. A. R.'s. Endless gossip and detail might be given of all these men. Hennion knew them well, some of them as far back as he could remember. Each of them held the corner threads of a spreading network of influences and personal interests. In Hennion's office they smoked and discussed. They varied discussion with anecdotes of Wood.

Major Tuttle wanted two of the ward schools enlarged, and offered plans and estimates of competing architects.

"Any preference, Major?" asked Hennion.

"I have given it some consideration," said the Major puffily, and stated considerations.

"Well," Hennion suggested, "why not give one to Smith and one to Hermon, and tell them to compete for glory. It might stir them up."

The circle laughed and nodded.

The North Shore R. R. had put in a large proposition involving a new bridge and station, street crossings, and various rights of way. Tait read a document signed "Wm. R. Macclesfield, President." Hennion suggested that they offer a counter-proposition.

"We don't want any more grade crossings down there. What makes him expect his right of way for a gift?"

"You know what they chipped in this spring?" said Tait, looking up.

"Pretty much. But Wood never sold out that way, did he?" He turned to Ranald Cam.

"Marve Wood ain't never made the city a bad bargain yet," growled Cam, "for all they gas about it." Tait was silent. The others disputed at length on obscure historic points in Wood's policy. The shadowy influence of the "old man" was still so strong in the circle that no one ventured to put any

doubt on the guiding wisdom of whatever he had done. They only disputed points of fact.

"He kept things solid," said Carroll, "that's the point."

"I should say Macclesfield would have to come up," said Hennion at last. "I'll bring you in a counter-estimate next week."

When the circle broke up an hour later, Tait lingered behind the rest. Tuttle, Beckett, and Cam went up Hancock Street together.

"I guess Dick's going to shut down on Tait," said Beckett. "Suit me all right if he does. Depends on how he handles Macclesfield, don't it? He's rather prompt, eh? I wouldn't exactly say brusque, but it won't do to rough Macclesfield. Guess you'd better advise him, Major. Say, why not?" Hennion seemed to him not so companionable, so comfortable as Wood.

"Possibly, possibly," said the Major.

Ranald Cam growled in his beard. Wood's

death was a heavy blow to him. Both the elder men had felt the touch of Hennion's deference toward them. They did not like Tait.

"Want to go over there with me, Hennion?" said Tait, puffing his black cigar rather fast. "See Macclesfield?"

"Not that I know of."

"Suppose I bring him over here?"

Hennion stared at the top of his desk for a full moment. "All right. Come in an hour."

Tait went out, and Hennion fell to figuring.

William R. Macclesfield was a cultivated gentleman, whose personal courtesies to all men seemed to be returned by fortune in personal courtesies to him. Macclesfield's attractiveness would be evident at first knowledge. Persuasion of his astuteness would follow not long after. Precipitate judgments on his character, based on the interview which here dropped into Hennion's

experience of men and things, were as well unmade. Hennion preferred to whistle and consider it.

"Should I congratulate or commiserate?" said Macclesfield, smiling and shaking hands.

"Commiserate, thank you."

Macclesfield sat down and talked on pleasantly.

"Yes, yes. Well, it may not be so bad as you think. It calls for great judiciousness. Wood, now, was a remarkable, I should say a judicious, man. I know. Your profession, of course. Times have changed since your father and I met thirty, yes, forty years ago. He was proud of his profession. Rightly so. Of course, rightly so. We enjoyed ourselves, too, we young men. The times were perhaps a little, I might say, rugged. Port Argent has grown. There have been remarkable developments in politics and engineering. Nowadays municipal affairs seem to call for a manager in the

background. If he's apt to be there, it must mean he is needed, but it's a peculiar position. You are quite right. But you were Wood's choice, and he was a very judicious man. You find it takes time and labour. Yes, and it calls for ability. Now, it is curious that some people seem to think one in that position ought not to get anything for his trouble. I call that absurd. I always found in railroading that time, labour, and ability had to be paid for. By the way, you learned engineering from your father, I think. Yes, an old friend of mine. I was thinking coming over the street just now with Tait—I was thinking what fine things he did in his profession. Very bold, and yet very safe. Remarkable. And yet engineering was almost in its infancy then."

"Yes," said Hennion, "the changes would have interested him."

"Indeed they would! So—the fact is—I was thinking that, if you cared to submit plans, I should personally like to see you

build that bridge of ours. I should personally like to see what Rick Hennion's son can do. An elderly man like me can be forgiven a little sentiment, even in business."

Hennion laughed. Macclesfield glanced up suddenly, but saw nothing in the young man's somewhat impassive face to trouble him.

"I'd like to build the bridge, of course. You don't think the sentiment needs any forgiveness from me?"

"My dear boy, it's perfectly sincere! You'll submit plans, then?"

"If you continue to want them."

"Good! Now—oh! Tait said something about the crossings. You think the figures too low. Tait said something of the kind. Perhaps they are a little. I'll look them over again. At the same time, you realise the feasibility depends on expense. We want to be fair. But considering how much more convenient to the public this new station will be, considering the benefit of that arrange-

ment, you think the city ought to be moderate?"

"Moderate in its generosity."

"Ah—I don't know—I was thinking that we understood each other—that is—the situation."

Hennion swung in his chair.

"I was thinking, Mr. Macclesfield, of the advantages of candour, and I was wondering what my father would have said about the situation. Wouldn't he have said, in his candid way, that a personal contract and the representative disposal of either city or trust properties were two transactions that had better not be mixed?"

"My dear boy, who's mixing them?"

"Well, I'm proposing to separate them. We'll take your station scheme. Considering the benefit and convenience, as you say, the city can afford to be moderate, but it can't afford any more grade crossings down there. You'll have to come in by a subway."

Macclesfield shook his head smilingly.

"We can't afford that, you see."

"Can't? Well, you can afford what you have to. May I ask what you expect to get through for, from Roper's front to Maple Street?"

"Oh, well—isn't this a little inquisitorial?"

"Not necessary, anyway. I know, about."

He named a figure. Macclesfield looked surprised.

Hennion went on slowly:

"The offer you have made Roper I happen to know that he won't take at all. You'll suspect, then, that the P. and N. are bidding against you. There'll be a mess, and you'd better not be in it. You might as well suspect it now. The P. and N. can afford anything they choose."

Macclesfield said nothing.

"I'm going to make a suggestion, Mr. Macclesfield, if you like."

"By all means!"

"I'm going to suggest that you put your bridge a half mile lower down, below the boathouses, and come up back of the Gas Works. If you don't know the holdings down there I'll give them to you."

He plunged, without waiting, into a stream of ordered and massed figures, following the suggested line from point to point, massed the figures of the Roper's front to Maple Street plan, compared them, and went on.

"The Gas Works people will be all right. A. J. Lee will make you some trouble. Dennis Dolan, being one of your stockholders, won't. You'll save about half on your right of way. Construction will be considerably more. You get an easy water-front instead of having to bid against the P. and N. By stopping beyond the Gas Works instead of going on to Maple Street you'll save seventy thousand at least. You'll have the marshes to develop your freight yards

without much limit. The station's preferable there, probably, from the city's standpoint. It will front on the Boulevard, if the Boulevard ever gets down there, and it will. You have a better curve, same connection with the P. and N., and this one here with the L. and S. You'd have to buy right and left on Maple Street. Here you get your site in a lump from Dolan and the Gas Works. Now, we'll take your approach on the east side."

More details massed and ordered. Macclesfield listened intently. Tait half closed his eyes and swung one nervous foot. Hennion concluded and paused a moment.

"Now, Mr. Macclesfield, allow me a little more candour. It amounts to this—first, if you can't touch me with a bridge, you can't touch me with anything."

"If I seemed to attempt it," said Macclesfield, "I owe you an apology for my awkwardness."

"None at all for anything. Secondly, a subway and no grade crossings this side the

Gas Works or on Lower Bank Street is final, so far as I can make it so. Thirdly, your proposal that I put in plans for the new bridge can now be very properly withdrawn."

Macclesfield smoothed his face thoughtfully.

"I don't deny a certain amount of surprise. You have discussed the subject very ably. I'd rather you'd let me have that in the form of a report."

"All right."

"And you'll add a preliminary estimate on the bridge? I—don't, in fact, withdraw it."

He rose and shook hands with Hennion.

"So you think the sentiment wasn't sincere? Well, I don't know. I sometimes have them."

"Tait," he said, as they went down the stairs. "That young man—for God's sake don't let's have any trouble with him."

"Is he going to bite or build?"

"Build! Bless my soul, I hope so! A young man—a—that won't lose his temper! He didn't turn a hair! Bless my soul, Tait, I hope so!"

Hennion was left to swing in his chair, to whistle and consider, to wonder what, in fact, might be the true sentiments of William R. Macclesfield, who had retreated neatly, to say the least. A slippery man, a little fishy, who slid around in a situation as if it were water. Perhaps that was injustice. Whether it were sincerity, or neatness, he had left Hennion with a sense of having done him an injustice.

He turned to his desk and figured and wrote for half an hour; then pushed aside the papers and went out. He thought he would go over to East Argent and see how Kennedy was getting on with the grading. Before he had gone far he changed his mind.

The grading job was not interesting. Kennedy could look after it. It might be

better to let him work alone for a day or two, without watching; it would cheer up Kennedy not to feel eternally disgraced for blundering with his sand layer, or to feel that he had to go around acting like a desolate orphan about it.

He took a car down Lower Bank Street, past the boathouses, and there paced the high wet and weedy river bank. Then he turned west through some miles of empty acres. Low marshy lands lay on his right, misty and warm in the distance, vividly green nearby. Now and again he crossed a street that had been thrust out speculatively from the vague verge of the city to tempt inhabitants. Cheap new houses were strung along them at wide intervals. The Gas Works had huge furnaces and a cluster of built-up streets about them. He followed the line of the Boulevard surveys, absorbed, often stopping and making notes. He came through a stretch of cornfield and pasture. If the city bought it in here before it began

to develop the section, it would be shrewd investment. The marshes would be crossed by an embankment.

A half mile further on he vaulted over a high fence and plunged into the wet woods and open spaces, scrubby and weedy, of Wabash Park, a stretch of three hundred acres and more, bought spasmodically by the city some years back and then left to its own devices. It was useful now mainly to small boys, who speared frogs in the broad, sluggish creek that twisted through between banks of slippery clay.

The Boulevard was another spasmodic vision of a forgotten commissioner. It was planned to run somewhat in the shape of a half circle, around the city, from a river-bank park on the north to a river-bank park on the south, with Wabash Park midway. Hennion tried to fancy himself a landscape gardener. He stood a long while staring down at the creek, which was brimful with the spring rains. Pools of brown water

lay all about the bottom lands and in the brush.

To build a bridge as it should be built, to shape a city as it should be shaped, to make Port Argent famous for its moon-shaped Boulevard, to accomplish something worth while, to make a name—it looked like a weedy road to travel in, and no small trick to keep out of the mud. Still, after all, the mud was mostly in the ruts. People said you couldn't get ahead there without splashing through the ruts. Maybe not. There would be blackguarding probably. But Macclesfield had been handled anyway.

Wabash Park was a scrubby-looking place now. Beckett would have to be sent after the Park Board, to tell them to clean it up. By the way, Macclesfield was on that effortless, or otherwise busy Park Board. The rest of the commissioners didn't know a landscape from a potato patch. Macclesfield was the man. He might be persuaded to have a sentiment on the subject.

Hennion followed the creek out of the park to a lately macadamised road. A wide, straight, half-made highway started from the other side of the road and stretched a half mile across country, with small maples planted regularly on either side. It was all of the Boulevard and the spasmodic commissioner's vision that had ever been realised. So it remained a fragment, of no use to anyone, one of Port Argent's humourous civic capers.

Beyond this, following the surveys, he came through a rough and noisy neighbourhood—factories, and unkempt streets, empty lots strewn with refuse—and came to the canal, the great Interstate Canal, built by Hennion the elder. It was idle now. The water splashed musically from its lock gates, and the towpath was overgrown. Then followed pastures with cattle in them, and fields where men were ploughing. He came to the river bank at last, where Wyandotte Park lay, popular already for Sunday after-

noons, popular somewhat on any afternoon in spring and summer for picnics and boating. It was dotted with stalls of the sellers of hard drinks and cigars, sellers of soft drinks and chewing gum. It possessed a band and an incipient menagerie, a merry-go-round, a boathouse, and several flamboyant restaurants. It was the cheerfullest place in Port Argent on a Sunday afternoon.

The day was almost gone. Hennion's notebook was half-full of mysterious jottings, and his shoes caked with clay, the slimy blue mud that sticks and stains and is the mother of harvests. The river had a swifter current here than lower down, and there were marshy islands, steep bluffs on either side, and up-stream a vista of deeply-wooded shores.

He stood near the merry-go-round and watched the crowd. He wondered if it were not peculiar for a man to know so many people as he did, to know almost everyone in

Port Argent. It had always been a fact to some extent. But Port Argent was getting to be a large city. Still, he had an impression that strange faces and unnamed were rather an exception. Most faces that he saw were familiar. He looked around him in the park.

Here were three young girls sipping soda water. He did not know them. Wait! They were all three daughters of Kottar, the baker on Maple Street. They'd been growing up. And here came Kottar himself with the rest of the flock, taking an afternoon's pleasure. Here were two men getting on the trolley car. They appeared to be mainly drunk. No use! He knew them too. One of them was Jimmy Shays, shoemaker, on Muscadine Street, east side; the other was Tom Coglan, one time a drayman, another time one of a batch of John Murphy's, which batch Hennion had helped John Murphy to get jobs for with the Traction Company. Coglan and Shays lived in

a house on Muscadine Street, with an outside stairway. Hicks, who shot Wood, used to live there too; grocery store underneath, grocer named Wilson. Names of Kottar's children, remembered to have once been so stated by Kottar, Nina, Katherine, Henry, Carl, William, Adela, and Elizabeth. One appeared to remember things useful, like the price per gross of three-inch screws at present quoting, as well as things useless, like the price three years ago. Hennion thought such an inveterate memory a nuisance.

Coglan and Shays appeared to be happy. Everybody appeared to be happy in Wyandotte Park. Hennion concluded that he liked Wyandotte Park and its people. When you knew them, you found they differ little for better or worse from Herbert Avenue people, Secors and Macclesfields—all people, and a mixed, uncertain article to deal in.

He sat down on the roots of a tree. It

grew on the edge of a bluff over the river, a survival of that fraternity of trees which had covered the whole section but a few generations back.

"Mighty good luck to be young, Dick," the "Governor" had said, and died, calling his life on the whole satisfactory, on account of the good times he had had, and the work that he knew he had done as it should be done.

Hennion thought he would go and tell Camilla about the Boulevard. He caught a car and went back to the centre of the town.

When he came to the Champney house late in the evening, Alcott Aidee was there, though about to leave. It struck Hennion that Aidee's being about to leave was not an absolute compensation for his being there, but he did not have time to examine the impression. Camilla had been reading Charlie Carroll's sinister paragraphs on "a certain admired instigator of crime." She dashed into the subject as soon as Aidee was gone.

"He says he doesn't care about it," she cried, "but I do!"

"Do you? Why?"

"Why!"

Camilla paused, either from stress of feeling or inability altogether to say why. Hennion had seen the paragraphs, but had not thought about them.

"Well, if you mean it's not just, Milly, I don't suppose Carroll ever bothers about that. There's a good deal of give and take in politics. Aidee has given it pretty sharply himself. I dare say he knows how to take it."

"It's wicked!" cried Camilla passionately.

Hennion laughed.

"Well—he needn't have called Wood names—that's true."

"If you're going to laugh about it, you can go away!"

"'Instigator of crime,' isn't so strong as 'thief,' is it? It's a pity they can't get

along without blackguarding each other, but probably they can't."

Camilla turned away. Her indignation was too genuine, and sobered him.

"My dear girl! I don't suppose Wood was properly called a 'thief' nor Aidee 'an instigator of crime.' Probably Aidee believes what he says. Probably Carroll hasn't the remotest idea what he believes. What of it? I've been tramping the wilderness of Port Argent all day and seeing visions, Milly, and I'd rather not quarrel. Did Aidee say he was going to do anything in particular?"

"He said he was going to see Mr. Hicks."

"What!"

"To see Mr. Hicks to-night. Of course he'll go to comfort someone that nobody else will," cried Camilla breathlessly, "and of course you'll say he'd be wiser to keep away and nurse his reputation, because people will talk. Perhaps you think it proves he's an anarchist, and makes bombs."

"You go too fast for me." He thought he did not dislike Aidee so much that he would not have stopped his going to see Hicks, if he could. He was not quite clear why he disliked him at all.

It was a turn of mind, characteristic of the Hennions, somewhat of the grimly philosophical, which set him to thinking next that Aidee's situation now, in the white-washed cell with the alias Hicks, must be confusing and not pleasant, that his own situation was vastly more comfortable, and that these, on the whole, were not bad situations.

He set himself to the fascinating task of making Camilla's eyes shine with excitement,—but he did not seem to succeed,—over the subject of a moon-shaped Boulevard, strung with parks, like a necklace around a lady's throat.

"I worked out that figure of speech for you, Milly. It's a beauty. Port Argent is the lady. A necklace ought to raise her self-respect. She'll have three hundred acres of

brooch in the middle called Wabash Park. She's eight miles on the curve from shoulder to shoulder. I walked it to-day. It struck me she needed washing and drying."

True, Camilla's indignation seemed to fade away. She said, "That's tremendously nice, Dick," and stared into the fire with absent wistful eyes.

He drew nearer her and spoke lower, "Milly."

"No, no! Don't begin on that!"

Presently he was striding up Lower Bank Street, hot-hearted with his disappointment.

"Well, Port Argent shall have her necklace, anyhow. Maybe I shan't. But I *will*, though!"

He went through the Court House Square past the old jail, glanced up under the trees at Hicks' barred window.

"Aidee's getting a black eye too in there," he thought. "That's too bad."

When he reached his rooms he was already thinking of Macclesfield's bridge.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Brothers

"MAY I see Hicks?"

The stout, bearded jailor nearly filled the doorway. He puffed his short pipe deliberately, and stared at Aidee. The smoke floated up and around the gas jet over his head.

"Ain't you the Preacher?"

"So they call me."

The jailor stepped back, either in surprise or consent. Aidee walked into the opening and passed on. The jailor followed him.

"Where is his cell?"

"Spiritual consolation! That's it. That's the word," said the jailor thoughtfully. "Some folks has the gift of it. Oils a chap up, don't it, so he'll slip out'n his corpse, like he was greased. Well, there's som'p'n in it. But I seen in the *Press* this mornin'—

say, you ain't goin' to instigate him again?"

Aidee laughed, and said:

"They have to be lively."

"That's right, Preacher. Folks say a thing, but what they got in their heads is the thing they don't say, ain't it?"

"You're a philosopher."

"Oh, I do a pile of thinkin'," said the jailor complacently.

He mounted slowly to the upper corridor, knocked at a door, and unlocked it.

"Hicks, gentleman to see you."

Hicks looked up, blinking and shading his eyes.

The jailor locked the door noisily behind Aidee, and walked away. At the end of the corridor he stopped and listened, and heard the murmur of low voices. He sat down and tipped his chair against the wall and meditated.

"Spiritual consolation! That's the word."

Alcott leaned his back against the wall, and stared at Allen, who ran to his side and grasped his arm and whispered, "Don't you yell out!" while Sweeney was locking the door noisily. Sweeney's steps receded in the corridor.

"What do you come here for? Keep quiet!"

"Lolly!"

"Who told you it was me?"

He pulled him over to the table. They sat down and gripped hands across and looked dumbly at each other. Allen broke down first. He dropped his head on the table and gave soft, dry sobs.

"Lolly, boy!"

"Did he tell you it was me?"

"Who?"

"Hennion!"

"Nobody told me it was you."

"You came to see Hicks!"

He looked up suddenly with an impish grin. "Hey! I know! You wanted to

ask me what I shot Wood for? That's what they all want to know."

It was the same twisted smile that Alcott knew so well, two-thirds on one side of his face, the same shy, freakish look in the eyes as of a cornered animal. They used to laugh at home over Lolly's queer smile—Lolly the original, the unexpected, the sudden and fierce in his small resentments, yet how passionately loving, and how lovable and clever! They used to think so at home. Here he was, then, with his twisted smile, and hot, black eyes and jerking, vivid speech. His thin, straggling beard had changed his looks. He had aged fast in the six years. Alcott thought he would hardly have recognised him at a little distance. So—why, Hicks!—Carroll said Hicks used to drink down Alcott's own speeches like brandy! Hicks had killed Wood!

"What else have you been up to, Lolly? That's the worst job yet."

The eyes of each regarded the other's

hungrily. Allen chattered on in a low, excited voice.

"Old Al, I love you so! Forgive me seventy times seven. Hey! I heard every speech you made, pretty near. What do you think? Say! What 'll they do to me?" he whispered, turning to the window. "I wished I could get out. Say, Al, when you were in Nevada at Beekman's, where do you suppose I was? Over the divide at Secor's Lode, Number Two, and you came near spotting me once! I ain't a fool, anyway. I dodged you neat. I lived on the east side with Jimmy Shays. Say, he's a fool. I can sole two shoes to his one. But sometimes I don't remember, Al. I tried to remember how Mummy looked, and I couldn't. But I used to remember. But, Al, what 'd you come for? Say, I cleared the track of Wood all right. Say, they'd never have caught me, if I'd got away then. They were too many. I kept out of your way all right. I wasn't going to mess you

again, and that suited me all right, that way. I pegged shoes along with old Shays. Damn greasy Irishman, there, Coglan. I'll knife him some day. No! No! I won't, Al! Forgive me seventy times. I got something in me that burns me up. I ain't going to last long. Let 'em kill me. God, I was proud of you! I used to go home like dynamite, and collar old Shays, and yell, 'Down with 'em! Where's justice?' 'Wha's matter?' says Shays. 'Where is 't?' and goes hunting for justice at the bottom of a jug of forty-rod whiskey. Oh, Al! Al! Ain't we a sad story, you and I?"

He broke down again, chattering, sobbing with soft, small sobs, and hid his face on the table. The gas jet leaped and fell, feebly, fitfully. The noises of the city, the roll of wheels and clang of street-car gongs, came in through the barred window.

"I was running myself, too, Al, and that made me feel better. I been happy sometimes."

"Aren't you glad to see me, Lolly?"

"Yes. But you ain't going to hold me down. Now, say, Al," he pleaded, "don't you give it away! Folks 'd be down on you. I ain't like I used to be. I'm proud of you, now. I ain't going to mess you any more, but I've done something myself, ain't I? Done for myself too, ain't I?"

"I've got to think this out. That was all wrong, boy. That old man, Wood, had a right to his life."

"He had *no* right!"

Allen was on his feet, two fingers shaking in the air.

"Quiet, Lolly! Sweeney's in the corridor. I'm not blaming you. Why didn't you come to me? I'd have let you live as you liked. I'm going away to think it out. Never mind. I say, drop it, Lolly! We'll sled together again. I've said it, and you can quit talking."

Allen clung to his hand.

"You're coming again, Al."

He felt Alcott's old mastery gripping him again, the same thing that had always been to him the foundation of his existence, and yet always intolerable and smothering. Not being able to live without Alcott, nor yet with him, the four years in Port Argent had seemed a clever solution—not with Alcott, nor yet without him; free of his smothering control, but seeing his face and hearing his voice.

He rattled on half hysterically, while Alcott gripped his hand across the table, and said little.

Gradually the picture took shape in Alcott's mind, and his mental image of the last four years changed form and line of the new demand. He saw Allen going home nights from the Assembly Hall, with his light, jerky step, exulting, hugging himself gleefully. How he had hated Al's enemies! How he had longed to kill Carroll for sneering at Al in choppy paragraphs! How he had hated Marve Wood, whom Al

called a "disease"! How he had lurked in the shadow under the gallery of the Assembly Hall! How he had pegged shoes and poured his excitement, in vivid language, into the ears of the east-side loafers in the shoe-shop! How flitted back and forth over the Maple Street bridge, where the drays and trolley cars jangled, where the Muscadine flowed, muddy and muttering, below!

"You've been in Port Argent all this time!" Alcott said at last. "I wouldn't have talked that way if I'd known you were there."

"Say! You'd have been afraid? No! Why, you ain't afraid of anything, Al!"

"I was always afraid of you."

"What for? You're coming again, Al!"

"You don't think I'm going to let you alone now!"

"I ain't going to mess you over again! No!" he whispered, twisting his fingers.

Alcott knitted his black brows and held his hand over the nervous fingers.

"Drop it, Lolly!"

"What you going to do? You're coming again?" His voice was thin and plaintive.

"Yes."

"How soon?"

"To-morrow. I've got to think it over. I can't stay now, Lolly."

He rose and went to the door and rattled it. Sweeney's steps came slowly down the corridor. Allen sat still while the jailor opened the door.

"I'll see you again, then, Mr. Hicks."

Allen looked up suddenly with an impish grin.

"Pretty cool, ain't he?" said Sweeney presently. "I didn't hear much noise. Now, when Mr. Hennion came here—look here, I told Mr. Hennion—why, you look at it, now! There ought to be a new jail."

"I see. Not very creditable."

"Why, no." Sweeney argued in an injured tone. "Look at it!"

"I want to bring Hicks a book or two. May I?"

"Why, I guess so."

Aidee went home, hurrying, not knowing why he hurried. His hands felt cold, his head hot and dizzy. He longed to hide and not see the faces on the street, faces which all judged that Lolly should die.

"Brotherhood of man!" He had a brother, one whom the rest of the brotherhood wanted to hang, a small man, with a queer smile and wriggling fingers, sitting under the dim gas jet.

Even in his familiar rooms he could not think or sleep. He saw before him days upon days, courts and lawyers, preparations for the trial, the long doubt, and what then? Only a black pit full of things intolerable, not to be looked at. Yet it stood there stolidly, in front.

The Assembly? He would rather have

Wood than the Assembly to help him here, or Hennion, or Secor. But neither Hennion nor Secor would help him here. They were men of the crowd in the street, who all preferred to hang Lolly.

At daybreak he rose, dressed, and went out. It was Friday morning. The air was fresh and damp. He looked at the Assembly building opposite, and fancied himself speaking from the familiar wide platform within, saying: "I am the brother of Hicks, the murderer, in your jail—I who lied to you, calling you my brethren, protesting one universal bond, who have but one brother and one bond of blood,—to you who are my enemies. His name is Allen Aidee, and your name is Legion."

People called him abrupt and sensational. It would be a relief to speak so, sharp and harsh, like the breaking of a window glass with one's fist in a stifling room.

He thought of the scores of times he had looked on the crowd of faces from the plat-

form there, and he tried now to put into each picture one more item, namely, Allen sitting far back in the shadow under the gallery. When he had put this item in, it covered up the rest of the picture.

Probably Allen used to go across the river by following the side streets over to Maple Street, and so to the bridge. Alcott left Seton Avenue and walked toward Maple Street through that still sleeping section of the city. On Maple Street, the trolley cars were beginning to run, milk waggons clattered over the rough pavement.

"Poor boy!"

Lolly claimed to have been happy during those four years. After all, the arrangement he had made was characteristic, the very kind of thing he would be apt to do. Alcott wondered why he had never suspected that Allen was lurking near him.

Down Maple Street, then, Allen's regular road must have lain. How often he must have gone over the bridge, his nerves twitch-

ing and his head blazing with Alcott's last words! Here was the hurrying muddy river, running high now with the spring floods, mad, headlong, and unclean. Not an inch beyond its surface could one see. A drowned body might float, and if an inch of water covered it, no man would know.

Doctrines and theories! Do this, and think thus, and believe that which I tell you, and take my medicine for a world diseased! What notional, unsteady things were these, floating things, only on the surface of this muddy stream of life. They had no other foundation than the stream, and the stream drowned them all, in course of time. It drowned all interpretations of itself, in course of time.

In East Argent he turned to the right, into Muscadine Street. On one side of the street stretched the P. and N. freight yards by the river, on the other shabby and flimsy fronts, some of wood, some of brick, with shops in most of the ground floors, an inhabited story

or two over each. Already Muscadine Street was awake. The freight yards were noisy with cars and hooting engines. The stream whistles of the down-river factories began to blow.

The harsh, pitiless iron clangour tortured him and he hurried through a street that seemed to lead away into the country back from the river. He stopped at a discarded horse car, that was propped up in an empty lot, and bore the sign "Night lunches," and went up the shaky step, through the narrow door. The occupant was a grimy-aproned man, asleep with his head on the counter. Alcott drank a cup of coffee and ate something, he hardly noticed what. It tasted unpleasantly.

One corner succeeded another in the long street. Then came empty lots, cornfields, clumps of woods, scores of trestle pyramids of the oil wells.

"Lolly! Lolly!"

Men and their societies, and all the struc-

tures they built, and the ideas that governed them, were monstrous, implacable, harsh, and hard, iron beating on iron in freight yards and factories. Justice! What was justice? One knew the sense of injustice. It was like a scald. It was a clamour and cry, "He has done me wrong, a wrong!" But justice? An even balance? There was no such balance. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? It was revenge. There was no justice but perfect pardon. You must know that uttermost love was justice, and not one iota less than that was justice.

Alcott's old doctrines, these. Doctrines only, "floating things on muddy stream." They seemed to mean to him now only, "I must have Lolly! I must have him!"

All that Alcott had built up about himself in four years now seemed suddenly wiped out of his desires. He wanted to take Allen and go away. It seemed a simple thing, not so complicated as the Seton Avenue Assembly, and the Brotherhood of Man. But

bars and bricks, metal and stone, and the iron refusal of society, were in the way of this simple thing. Their stolid refusal faced him as well in the woods as in the city.

The woods were wet and cool. No sound reached the centre of the grove from without, except the far-off thudding of an oil well. Shy wood birds flitted and twittered. Fragments of twigs and bark dropped from heights where the squirrels were at their thriving enterprises, and the new leaves were growing.

## CHAPTER XII

### Aidee and Camilla

ALCOTT came back to the city in the afternoon. At four o'clock he was on Lower Bank Street, knocking at Henry Champney's door.

"Is Miss Camilla Champney in?"

The startled maid stared at him and showed him into the library, where Henry Champney's shelves of massive books covered the lower walls, and over them hung the portraits of Webster, Clay, and Quincy Adams with solemn, shining foreheads.

He walked up and down, twisting his fingers, stopping now and then to listen for Camilla's steps. She came soon.

"I'm so glad you're here! I want to ask——" She stopped, caught a quick breath, and put her hand to her throat.

"What is it?"

Alcott's face was white and damp, and his black eyes stared at her. He stood very still.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Do I look like that? Do I show what I am, gone blind and mad? Do I look it? I could only think of this, of you—I must tell someone. There must be some way. Help me!" He moved about jerkily, talking half incoherently. "He's been here four years. Allen, you know! If I'd known, I could have handled him somehow. But—he's—Hicks — he called himself — Hicks. He killed Wood. I saw him last night, but he's changed, but—my boy, Lolly! Four years he's been in Port Argent—watching me! He called himself Hicks. Don't you see, Camilla! It's my boy! Don't you see! Wait. I'll get buckled down. I can tell you better in a moment."

Camilla leaned back against Henry Champney's big desk, and stared with wide grey eyes. Alcott walked away breathing

heavily, and returned. He sat down in the desk chair and dropped his head on his arm.

"It's your brother!"

"I must save him! Don't you understand? No one shall touch him! He's mine!" He sprang up, walked away, and came again.

Camilla thought of many confused things. The bluebird's note was gone from her heart, but the current of the tumult that was there ran in one direction. It poured into Alcott's passion and point of view. Her new pillar of fire and cloud, the man with the halo of her own construction was begging for help, a demigod suddenly become human and suffering, stammering, calling himself blind and mad.

"Why, we must get him out!" she cried.

She thought of Dick. Another instinct warned her that he would not understand. It was a case where Dick would be a rock in the way, instead of one to anchor to. But

thinking of him served to remind her of what he had said the night before.

"Listen!" She went on. "He must get out. Listen! Somebody told Dick—what was it? Something about a crowbar or pair of—nonsense! He said a prisoner might get out if he had a chisel. Now we must think about it. Could he get out?"

She sat down too. Alcott stared at her in a kind of dull confusion.

"Now, this is what I'm thinking," she hurried on. "What is the place like?"

"The place?"

"When do you go to him again?"

"When I leave here. Perhaps. I hadn't thought."

They leaned closer together across the desk.

Miss Eunice came in that moment and startled them. She disapproved of their startled expression, he gave Alcott a gloomy greeting and went away.

"There's a chest of tools in the storeroom," Camilla said. "We'll go up there."

They mounted to that high-perched room above the mansards, whose windows looked eastward to the river, whose walls were ranged about with boxes, trunks, chests, bits of aged furniture.

Here Richard the Second and Camilla, the little maid, used to sit the long rainy afternoons at their labor. He made bridges, houses, and ships, his artistry running no further than scroll and square patterns, while Camilla aspired to the human face divine. Her soul was creative at ten years. She cut ominous faces on pine shingles, sorrowful shapes—tombstone cherubs in execution, symbolic in intention—and her solemn exaltation of mood was commonly followed by anger and tears because Dick would not admire them.

It was a room full of memories for Camilla. Here and in her father's library she still passed her happiest hours. Here was the

trunk that held her retired dolls and baby relics. Another was full of her mother's blue-ribboned gowns. Here was the tool chest, close to the window.

She flung it open, making a great noise and business.

"See! Will this do?"

It was a heavy carpenter's chisel with a scroll design on one side of the battered handle, and on the other the crude semblance or intention of a woful face. "I don't know whether it's Dick's or mine. We both used to make messes here." She chattered on, and thought the while, "He called me Camilla—I wish—I wonder if he will again."

He thrust it into an inner pocket, ripping through the lining of his coat. She closed the lid, and turned about to the low-silled window, clasped her hands about her knees, and stared away into the tree tops, flushed and smiling.

"You needn't go yet?"

"It's three o'clock."

"You'll come and tell me to-morrow? When?"

Alcott did not seem to hear her.

"I'm sure I could take care of him now," he said.

"But you'll remember that I helped!"

"Does anyone ever forget you?"

Both were silent, and then he started up nervously.

"It isn't done yet. Lolly is clever. He lived here four years and kept out of my sight. But, afterwards, granted he succeeds—but the law is a great octopus. Its arms are everywhere. But he'll have me with him. I suppose we must go out of the country."

"You! Do you mean—do you—you'll go too!"

"Go! Could I stay?"

"Oh! I don't know! I don't know!"

She shivered and leaned against the friendly old chest.

"But could I do it without that? How could I? I couldn't do less than that."

He came and sat beside her again, clasping his knees in the same way, looking off into the tree tops, talking slowly and sadly.

"To be with him always, and give up my life to that, and see that he doesn't do any more harm. That would be the debt I would owe to the rest of the world. You see, I know him so well. I shall know how to manage him better than I used to. I used to irritate him. Do you know, I think he's better off in places where things are rough and simple. He has an odd mind or temperament, not what people call balanced or healthy, but it's hot and sensitive; oh, but loving and hating so suddenly, one never knows! You understand. I don't know how you do, but you do understand, somehow, about Lolly and me. You're wholly healthy, too, but Lolly and I, we're

morbid of course. Yes, we're morbid. I don't know that there's any cure for us. We'll smash up altogether by and by."

"When will you go?" she asked only just audibly.

"He ought to try it to-night. To-night or to-morrow night. He ought to be away on one of the early freight trains, to St. Louis, and meet me there. We know our bearings there."

Camilla sat very still.

"I must be going," he said.

"Don't go! You'll come before—when?"

"To-morrow we'll know. To-morrow then."

After he was gone, she lifted the window and peered over the mansards to watch him going down the street. The tree tops were thick with busy sparrows, the railroad yards clamorous, and there was the rattle of the travelling crane, and the clug-chug of steamers on the river.

She drew back, and leaned against the old chest, and sobbed with her face against the hard, worn edge of it.

"I didn't suppose it would be like this," she thought. "I thought people were happy."

Meanwhile Miss Eunice sat below in the parlour knitting. Hennion came in later and found her there. She said that Camilla, she thought, was upstairs, and added primly:

"I think it will be as well if you talk with me."

He smothered his surprise.

"Why, of course, Miss Eunice!"

"I think you need advice."

He sat down beside her, and felt humble.

"That's just what I need. But, Miss Eunice, do you like me well enough to give it?"

"I like you more than some people."

"You might do better than that."

"I like you well enough to give it," she admitted.

Tick, tick, tick, continued the knitting needles.

"I'm stumped, you know, about Camilla," Dick went on bluntly. "I don't get ahead. She has changed lately. Hasn't she changed?"

"She has changed."

"Well, then, she has! I thought so."

The knitting needles ticked on, and both Dick and Miss Eunice studied their vibrating points, crisscrossing, clicking dry comments over the mystery of the web.

"It is my constant prayer that Camilla may be happy," said Miss Eunice at last. "I have felt—I have examined the feeling with great care—I have felt, that, if she saw her happiness in your happiness, it would be wise to believe her instinct had guided her well. My brother's thoughts, his hopes, are all in Camilla. He could not live without

her. He depends upon her to such an extent,—as you know, of course."

"Of course, Miss Eunice."

"I have grieved that she seemed so wayward. I have wished to see this anxious question settled. You have been almost of the family since she was a child, and if she saw her happiness in—in you, I should feel quite contented, quite secure—of her finding it there, and of my brother's satisfaction, in the end. He must not be separated from her. He could not—I think he could not outlive it. And in this way I should feel secure that—that you would understand."

"I hope I should deserve your tribute. I'm more than glad to have it."

"Perhaps this long intimacy, which makes me feel secure, is, at the same time, the trouble with her?"

"But why, Miss Eunice? I don't understand that. It has struck me so. And yet I love Camilla the more for all I know of her,

and the better for the time. How can it be so different with her?"

"That is true. I don't doubt it, Richard."

"Well, then, is it because I don't wear well?"

"No. It is true, I think, that we don't understand this difference always—perhaps, not often. But I think,"—knitting a trifle more slowly, speaking with a shade of embarrassment—"I think, with women, it *must* be strange in order to be at all. It must not be customary. It must always be strange."

Hennion looked puzzled and frowning.

"Please go on."

"Lately then, very lately, I have grown more anxious still, seeing an influence creeping into her life, against which I could not openly object, and which yet gave me great uneasiness. It—he was here an hour ago. I should not perhaps have spoken in this

way, but I thought there was something unusual between them, some secrecy or confusion. I was distressed. I feared something might have occurred already. I wished to take some step. You know to whom I refer?"

"I think so."

"A gentleman, in appearance at least. One does not know anything about his past. He is admired by some, by many, and disliked or distrusted by others. He has great gifts, as my brother thinks. But he thinks him also 'heady,' 'fantastic.' He has used these words. My brother thinks that this society called 'The Assembly' is a mere fashion in Port Argent, depending for financial support, even now, on Mr. Secor, and he thinks this gentleman, whom I am describing, is not likely to continue to be successful in our society, in Port Argent, but more likely to have a chequered career, probably unfortunate, unhappy. My brother regards—he calls him—'a spasmodic phe-

nomenon.' My own disapproval goes further than my brother's in this respect. Yet he does not approve of this influence on Camilla. It causes him uneasiness. I have not thought wise to speak to her about it, for I am afraid of—of some mistake, but I think my brother has spoken, has said something. This—this person arouses my distrust, my dislike. I look at this subject with great distress."

Tick, tick, tick, the knitting needles, and their prim, dry comment.

Hennion said gravely:

"I have nothing to say about the gentleman you've been speaking of. I will win Camilla if I can, but I've come to the point of confessing that I don't know how."

Tick, tick, the not uneloquent knitting needles.

"Will you tell me, Miss Eunice? You said something about love as it comes to women, as it seems to them. I had never

thought about it, about that side of it, from that side."

"I dare say not."

Tick, tick, tick.

"You said it must always be strange. I suppose, that is, it's like a discovery, as if nobody ever made it before. Well, but, Miss Eunice, they never did make it before, not that one!"

"Oh, indeed!"

"Don't you think I'm coming on?"

"You are progressing."

Miss Eunice's lips were compressed a little grimly, but there was a red spot in either cheek.

"I ought to act as if I didn't see how she was possible, ought I?"

"You are progressing."

"Whether I did see, or didn't?"

"Of course!" Miss Eunice was almost snappish.

"Well, I don't think I do see."

"You'd better not."

Hennion went away without seeing Camilla. Going up Bank Street he thought of Camilla. At the corner of Franklin Street he thought of Miss Eunice.

"There's another one I was off about. I don't see how she's possible, either."

## CHAPTER XIII

### In which Hicks is Busy

ALLEN AIDEE lay on his back across the bed in his whitewashed cell, and smoked, swinging one foot swiftly, incessantly, like a pendulum, arguing with Sol Sweeney, and gesticulating with loose fingers. The bed was a wooden cot with a mattress on it.

Sweeney sat at the table under the gas jet, and smoked too. He had a large friendly acquaintance with jailbirds, and his placid philosophy was composed out of his knowledge of them.

"I seen folks like you, Hicks," he said, "two or three. Trouble is you gets hold of one end of a string. Any old string 'll do. All the same to you. 'Hullo!' you says, 'this is a valyble string. Fact, there ain't any other string, not any other real string.

This the only genwine. Follow it, and you gets wherever you like. It's that kind of a string,' says you. 'God A'mighty, what a string!' says you. Then you rolls yourself up in it, and there you are! Ball up! Ain't no more use! For you take a solid man like me, and he talks to you and he shows you reason, but you don't see it. Why? 'Cause you're balled up in the string, that's why."

Allen snapped out his answer.

"I'll tell you the trouble with you."

"Ain't any trouble with me."

"Ain't! Well, I know this, I can stand your kind about half an hour at a stretch. Give me two hours of you—damn! I'd drink rat poison to get cooled down."

"That's the trouble with you," said the complacent jailor. "Ain't me."

"Trouble! No! You ain't equal to that. You ain't capable of that! You've got no more consistency or organisation than a barrel of oil. You're all fat and hair.

Solid! So's a brick solid. Damn! You're solid, but are you alive? You'll be dead before anybody sees the difference. Ain't any real difference!"

Sweeney puffed his pipe contentedly, but thoughtfully, and shook his heavy beard.

"Well, well! But now, I'll say this for you, Hicks. You're an entertainin' man. I'll say that to anybody that asks. I'll say, 'Hicks is a man that's got language, if I know what's what.'"

The jailor rose. Allen swung his foot swiftly.

"I wish you'd do something for me, Sweeney."

"What's that?"

"Let me have the gas at night. I don't sleep good. If I had the gas I could get up and read. You heavy men, you sleep all night. You don't know what it is."

"Why, I'll see, Hicks. I'll ask about that to-morrow."

"Oh, let me have it to-night!" he pleaded.

"I ain't going to sleep good to-night. I can feel it. It 'll be eternity before morning. I swear I'll be dead before morning. I'll turn it low."

"Well—I don't see no harm in that. It ain't in me to rough a man."

He went out, locking the door noisily behind him.

Allan lay still. His foot swung steadily, but more slowly. After a time Sweeney came down the corridor, making his ten o'clock round. He went to the end, and back again, and then downstairs. The corridor was quiet.

Half an hour later Allen got up and filled his pipe, lit it at the gas jet, turned the jet low, and lay down again across his mattress. He smoked with quick, sharp puffs, but not fast. He swung his foot slowly, and stared at a point on the blank wall over the gas jet. Eleven o'clock struck.

After the theatre crowds were gone past, the noise of the city grew less. There were

fewer cars, and only now and then footsteps on the neighbouring pavement. Twelve o'clock struck.

He got up again, slipped off his shoes, and went to his window.

A maple tree grew directly in front, some twenty feet away. Its leaves were thick, but he could see the glitter of the electric light through them. The sidewalk was high as the lower windows of the jail, for the Court House Square was on sunken land. The black shadow of the maple covered the front of the jail down to the ground.

The grating of the window had its bars set at both sides, and at the top and bottom. There were two rows of bricks from the bars to the inner edge of the window, and the wooden framework that held the panes of glass was set close to the grating. The outside of the sill was stone.

Allen went back and lifted his mattress. There was a rent in the seam of the lower

edge. He thrust in his hand, drew out a black cloth cap and put it on his head. Then he drew out a heavy chisel with a battered wooden handle, and returned to the window.

The woodwork came away, cracking slightly as the nails drew out. He leaned the boards and frame carefully against the wall. He tried one crack after another between the bricks at the bottom of the window, pushing and pressing. Presently one became loose, then another. He laid them one by one in a neat row on the floor.

The work at the sides and top was slower, because it was difficult to get a purchase, and to prevent fragments from falling. He dug till he got the purchase, and then held the brick up with one hand and pried with the other. Once a fragment of cement fell with a smart slap on the sill. He got down suddenly and sat on the floor, and listened, wiping his wet hands and forehead with his cap. Either Sweeney or his assistant was

always around at night, and would have heard, if he had happened to be in the upper corridor.

He carried the mattress to the window and laid it underneath to catch and deaden the noise, if anything more fell.

It was half-past one by the striking of the city clocks when he finished stripping off the first thickness of bricks. If the ends of the bars were buried more than two layers downward, there would not be time to strip them all before daylight. He forced up those on the sill, which were opposite one of the bars, and felt with his fingers. He felt the end of the bar, and knew that at that rate he would be out by three o'clock.

He worked on. His black hair hung wet against his forehead. He watched intensely for the loosened fragments of cement. He grew more skilful, more noiseless. The loudest sound in the cell was his own breathing, and except for that, only little rasps and clicks.

When the last brick was out and laid in its place, he moved the grating, which came out easily with a little scraping noise. It was heavy, and he rested a corner of it on the mattress, so that the ends of the bars caught in the sides of the window. Then he brought his blanket. In lifting the blanket he noticed the short iron braces on the cot bed. They suggested an idea. He took out the screws of one of them with the chisel, carried it to the window, and scratched it on the bricks until its black enamel was rubbed off one end; then laid it on the floor. Whether possible to do so or not, people would think he must have loosened the bricks with the brace. He wasn't going to mess "old Al" again, he thought, no, nor meet him in St. Louis for that matter, nor be led around the rest of his life by a string.

"Not me, like a damn squealing little pig."

He slit one end of the blanket into strips

with his chisel, tied each strip to the bars of the grating and dropped the other end of the blanket through the window. Leaning out, he looked down and saw that it reached the grating of the window below. He put his shoes into his side coat pockets, the chisel into an inner coat pocket, and felt in his vest for the money Alcott had left him. He pulled his cap on hard, turned off the gas jet, and climbed over the grating.

He gripped with both hands the corner of it which projected into the window, opposite the corner which rested on the mattress within the cell, and let himself down till his feet caught on the grating of the window below, slipping his hands alternately along the edges of the blanket, and so down step by step, feeling for the bars with his feet. When his feet reached the stone sill below he felt the top bars under his hands. He stopped to catch the lower bars in order to lower himself to the ground, and his face

came opposite the upper half of a partly dropped window. The lower half of it was curtained. A gas jet burned inside.

The room was like the cell overhead, whitewashed, but larger and furnished with ordinary bedroom furniture. The gas jet was fixed in the same place as in his own cell. The light fell flickering across the wide bed. A man lay there asleep on his back, his thick beard thrust up and in the air, his feet toward the window, where Allen clung like a spider. The sleeper was Sweeney. Allen slipped to the ground, sat down, and covered his face with his hands, and shivered. He had not known that Sweeney slept underneath him.

He pulled on his shoes, stood up, and went out under the maple tree to the sidewalk. He was glad he had not known that Sweeney slept underneath him. The sky was nearly covered by clouds, a few sparkling spaces here and there.

The blanket hung from the dismantled

upper window, and flapped in the night wind against the wall.

As he climbed the bank to the sidewalk the clock in the church tower across the street struck three. It frightened him. It seemed too spectacular a place to be in, there under the great arc light that poured its glare down upon him, while the bells above the light were pealing, shouting in their high tower, clamouring alarm over the Court House Square, over the little old jail, the grim, small, dingy jail, low down in the sunken land, jail of the one ungrated window and flapping blanket, jail of the sleeping Sweeney.

He hurried along the sidewalk toward Maple Street. At the corner of the square was a drug store with gas jets flaring behind two glass globes—one red, the other blue—the two dragonish eyes of the monstrous long shape of the block looming behind and over them. All the blocks around seemed unnaturally huge. They crowded close to the

street, and stared down at him with their ghastly blank windows—nervous, startled fronts of buildings that shivered and echoed to the sound of his steps. There were no other sounds now but a small whispering wind, and his own steps and their pursuing echoes. The red and blue globes in the corner drug store glared intolerably. As he passed they began suddenly to flow and whirl all over their glassy slopes.

He turned to the right, past the great brick Ward School building, out of Easter Street into Buckeye Street, which was only an unpaved road; and here his feet made no noise in the dust; neither were there any lights; so that he went softly in the darkness. A row of little wooden shanties were on the right, and on the left the mass of the Ward School building. Still higher, the roof of a steepleless church, whose apse overhung the empty lot behind the school, rose up, splitting the sky with its black wedge. In front of him were the buildings of the Beck Carriage Fac-

tory, bigger than church and school together. The vacant spaces between them, these buildings and shanties, were by day overflowed with light, overrun by school children and factory hands, over-roared by the tumult of the nearby thoroughfares of Bank and Maple Streets. By night they were the darkest and stillest places in Port Argent. One man might pass another, walking in the thick dust of the cart road and hardly be aware of him. It was too dark to see the rickety fence about the schoolyard, or make out the small sickly maples.

He came to a sidewalk with a curb, and saw up the hill to the left the dim glow from the lights of Maple Street, and went toward them. At the corner of Maple Street he stopped and thrust his head cautiously around the angle of the building.

A block below, a policeman stood in the glare of the arc light, swinging his club slowly by its cord, and looking around for

objects of interest, not apparently finding anything of the kind. Allen drew back his head.

It might be better to go back and cross Bank Street at another point and so come to the bridge along the docks by the river. It would take some time. He would have to pass an electric light in any case.

Footsteps were approaching on Maple Street from the other direction. Presently four men appeared on the other corner and crossed to the corner where he stood flattened against the wall, and in the shadow. All walked unsteadily, with elaborate care. Two of them maintained a third between them. The fourth followed a few paces in the rear.

As they passed, Allen pulled his cap over his eyes, and dropped in behind them, and so they approached Bank Street, and he drew close to the three in front.

"Hullo!" said the policeman calmly; "jagged?"

"Say!" exclaimed the maintainer on the left, stopping; "tha's mistake. Smooth as silk. Ain't it?"

"You're out late, anyhow," said the policeman.

"It's a weddin'. Ain't it? Wa'n't us. 'Nother feller did it."

"Well, get along, then."

"All ri'! All ri'!"

He watched the five men as far as the next electric light, and then dropped them as objects of interest.

"Hol' on!" exclaimed the man walking beside Allen, turning suddenly upon him. "That ain't right. There's five of us. Two, three, four, five. Bet your life! That ain't right."

They all stopped and looked at Allen. He started and his breath came harsh in his throat.

"'Nother weddin'?" said the middleman thickly. "Wa'n't him. 'Nother feller did it. You didn', did you?"

Allen shook his head " No."

" Tha's so! Well, tha's right. 'Sh good thing. If 'nother feller does it, 'sh good thing."

They shambled on amiably across the drawbridge. Allen fell behind, stopped, and leaned against the guard rail.

In a few moments he could hear their footsteps no more, but he could hear the mutter of the river against the stone piers. Leaning over the rail, he could see here and there a dull glint, though the night was dark; and across the wide spaces over the river he could see the buildings on each side, low, heavy masses, only saved from the smothering night and made sullenly visible by the general glow of the street lamps beyond them. There a few red lights along shore, some in the freight yards, some belonging to anchored or moored vessels, small sail-boats, and long black lumber and coal barges from the northern lakes. He could remember looking down at other times in the

night at the dull glint of water, and being shaken as now by the jar of fighting things in his own mind, angry things fighting furiously. At those times it seemed as if some cord within him were strained almost to snapping, but always some passing excitement, some new glittering idea, something to happen on the morrow, had drawn him away. But those moments of despair were associated mainly with the glinting and mutter of dusky water. "I been a fool," he muttered, and a little later, "What's the use!"

He decided to go to the shoe-shop and change his clothes, shave his beard, and pick up a few things, and then hide himself on some outgoing freight train, the other side of Muscadine Street, before the morning came. The morning could not be far off now. Shays would keep quiet, maybe, for a while. He would take Shays' razor.

He roused himself and moved on. He be-

gan to have glimpses of schemes, tricks, and plans. There were little spots of light in his brain, which for a while had seemed numb, dull, and unstirring. But he carried away with him the impression of the glints of the gloomy river and the mutter of its hurrying.

His feet dragged with his weariness. He turned into Muscadine Street and crept along the sidewalk on the right.

Suddenly a switch engine in the freight yards glared him in the face with its one blinding eye, yelled and hissed through its steam whistle, and came charging toward him. He leaped aside and fell into a doorway, and lay there crouching. Then he sat up and whimpered, " I ain't fit. I'm all gone away. I ain't fit."

He rubbed his face and hands, peered around the corner to see the harmless engine withdrawing in the distance, then got up and crossed the street. The nearness of the familiar shop windows, as he passed them one

after another, comforted him not a little. On the next corner was the grocer's, the butcher's shop this side of it, and the shoemaker's shop was over the rear of the grocery. The mingled butcher-shop and grocery smell pervaded the corner, comforting, too, with its associations.

He turned the corner and climbed slowly the outside wooden stairway, with the signboard at the top, "James Shays," and leaning over the railing, he saw a faint light in the windows of the shop. He entered the hall, turned the knob of the door softly, opened the door part way, and peered in.

The table stood in its ordinary central place, on it were a bottle, a tin cup, and a small lit lamp with a smoky chimney. The work bench was unchanged in place. The door of the inner room beyond stood open, but that room was dark. On the pile of hides in the corner some clothes, taken from the hooks overhead, had been thrown, and

on the clothes lay Coglan, face downward and asleep.

Allen thought, "He's sleeping on my clothes," and stepped in, closing the door softly behind him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### In which Hicks Comes to His Rest

HE stood a moment with his hands against the closed door behind him, listening to Coglan's heavy breathing. Then he crossed noiselessly to the table, took the lamp and went through to the inner room.

There were two cot beds in it. Shays lay asleep on one in all his clothes, except his shoes. The other bed was broken down, a wreck on the floor. Evidently Coglan had been using it, and it was not built for slumberers of his weight, so he had gone back to the hides that had often furnished him with a bed before.

Shays turned his face away from the light and raised one limp hand in half-conscious protest. He opened his eyes and blinked stupidly. Then he sat up.

"Don't make a noise, Jimmy," said Allen. "I'm going pretty soon."

"G-goin'—wha' for?" stammered Shays. "Wha's that for?"

"I've broke jail. I'm going to change clothes and shave, then I'll light out. You won't see me again, Jimmy."

He sat down on the side of the bed and rocked to and fro, twisting his fingers.

"You're decent, Jimmy. When they get to posting notices and rewards, you see, you don't do a thing. Nor you don't wake Coglan. He's a damn hound. See?"

Shays shook his head, indicating either a promise or his general confusion and despondency.

"Wha' for, Hicksy?"

Allen was silent a moment.

"Jim-jams, Jimmy," he said at last. "You'll die of those all right, and Coglan will squat on you. You ain't bright, but you've been white to me."

"Tha's right! Tom don't like you.

Hicksy, tha's right," whispered Shays with sudden trembling. " Maybe he'd —'sh! We won't wake him, Hicksy. Wha' for?"

" He's sleeping on my clothes, so I'll take yours. Get me your razor."

"Wha' for? Wha's that for? All right! I ain't going to wake Tom."

He stepped unsteadily on a shoe that lay sidewise, stumbled, and fell noisily on the floor.

There he lay a moment, and then scrambled back to his feet, shaking and grumbling.

" What's the matter?" Coglan cried, now awake in the shop.

" Nothin', Tommy! I'm gettin' back, Tommy!"

" What you doin' with thot light?"

" Nothin', Tommy."

Allen stood still. When Coglan came stamping unevenly to the door, he only made a quick shift of the lamp to his left hand, and thrust the other inside his coat till he felt the wooden handle of the chisel.

"Oi!" said Coglan.

His eyes seemed more prominent than ever, his face and neck heavier with the drink and sleep than was even natural. Allen looked at him with narrowed eyes.

"He's broke out," Shays said, feebly deprecating. "He's goin' off," and sat on the bed to pull on his shoes.

"Is he thot!" said Coglan.

Coglan turned back slowly into the shop. Shays shuffled after. Allen followed, too, with the lamp and said nothing, but put the lamp on the table. Coglan sat down, drank from the black bottle, and wiped his mouth. The first dim light of the morning was in the windows.

"I'll be getting along, Jimmy," said Allen. "I'll take your razor."

Coglan wiped his mouth again.

"An' ye'd be goin' widout takin' advice of a sinsible mon, Hicksy, an' a friend in need! Sure, sure! Didn't I say ye weren't a wise mon? Nor Jimmy here, he ain't a

wise mon. An' ain't I proved it? Ain't it so? Would ye be jailed if ye was a wise mon? No! Here ye are again, an' ye'd be runnin' away this time of the mornin', an' be took by a polaceman on the first corner. I do laugh an' I do wape over ye, Hicksy. I do laugh an wape. An' all because ye won't take advice."

"What's your advice?"

Coglan moved uneasily and cleared his throat. "'Tis this, for ye're rasonable now, sure! Ye'll hide in the back room a day or two. Quiet, aisy, safe! Jimmy an' me to watch. An' what happens to ye? Ye gets away some night wid the night before ye."

He lowered his voice and gestured with closed fist.

"Ye'll lie under Jimmy's bed. The polaceman comes. 'Hicks!' says Jimmy, 'we ain't seen Hicks.' 'Hicks!' says I, 'Hicks be dommed! If he's broke jail he's left for Chiney maybe.' I ask ye, do they

look under Jimmy's bed? No! What do they do? Nothin'!"

Allen drew a step back.

"You're right about one thing," he said. "That reward would be easy picking for you."

"What's thot?"

"I ain't a wise man. I know it. But I know you. That's what it is. I'm going now."

"Ye're not!"

"Hicksy!" cried Shays feebly. "Tom, don't ye do it!"

Coglan plunged around the table and grasped at Allen's throat, at Allen's hand, which had shot behind his head, gripping the heavy chisel. Allen dodged him, and struck, and jumped after as Coglan staggered, and struck again. The corner of the chisel seemed to sink into Coglan's head.

Allen stood and clicked his teeth over his fallen enemy, who sighed like a heavy sleeper, and was still. It was a moment of

tumult, and then all still in the shop. Then Shays stumbled backward over the work bench, and dropped on the hides. Allen turned and looked at him, putting the chisel into one of the side pockets of his coat, where it hung half-way out. The light was growing clearer in the windows.

"That's the end of me," he said.

And Shays cried angrily, "Wha's that for?" and cowered with fear and dislike in his red-lidded eyes. "Keep off me! You keep off me!"

"I got to the end, Jimmy. Good-bye."

"Keep off me!"

Allen hung his head and went out of the shop into the dark hall.

Shays heard his steps go down the outside stairway. He scrambled up from the pile of hides, and snatched his hat. He kept close to the wall, as far as possible from where Coglan lay against the legs of the table. He was afraid. He vaguely wanted

to get even with the man who had killed Coglan. He had loved Coglan, on the whole, best among living men.

People in the rooms about the hall were roused by the noise, and were stirring. Someone called to him from a door in the darkness. He hurried down the outside stair. On Muscadine Street he saw Allen a half block away, walking slowly.

At the corner of the next street, as Allen stepped from the curb, the chisel dropped from his pocket, but he did not notice it, plodding on, with head down and dragging steps. Shays picked up the chisel when he came to the spot, stared at it stupidly, and thrust it in his pocket. The two kept the same distance apart and came out on the bridge.

The city and water-front for the most part were quite still, though it was nearly time for both to waken, and for the milk and market waggons to come in, and the trolley cars to begin running. The street lights

had been turned off. There were forebodings of sunrise, over and beyond the disorderly roofs of East Argent. In the hush of that hour the muttering of the Muscadine whispering, rustling along the piers, seemed louder than by day. The dark buildings on the western river-front had the red glimmer of the sunrise now in their windows. No one was on the bridge except Shays and Allen, possibly a hidden and sleepy watcher in the drawbridge house.

Close to the drawbridge Allen stopped and looked back. Shays stopped, too, and muttered, "Wha's that for? Wha' for?" and found his mind blank of all opinion about it, and so, without any opinion what for, he began to run forward at a stumbling trot. Allen glanced back at him, leaped on the guard rail, threw his hands in the air, and plunged down into the river.

When Shays came there was nothing to be seen but the brown rippled surface; nor to be heard, except the lapping against the

piers. He leaned over limply, and stared at the water.

"Wha' for?" he repeated persistently. "Wha's that for?" and whimpered, and rubbed his eyes with a limp hand, and leaned a long time on the rail, staring down at the mystery, with the other limp hand hung over the water pointing downward. "Wha' for?"

The city was waking with distant murmurs and nearby jarring noise. A freight train went over the P. and N. bridge.

Shays drew back from the railing and shuffled on till he had come almost to Bank Street; there he stopped and turned back, seeing a trolley car in the distance coming down Maple Street. He went down on the littered wharves, close to the abutments of the bridge, sat down on a box, leaned against the masonry, and took from his pocket the chisel he had picked up, stared at it, rubbed it in the refuse at his feet, and put it back in his pocket. The sun was risen now, the

spot grew pleasantly warm, and he went to sleep muttering in the morning sunlight on the wharf by the Muscadine, and over his head went the trucks, waggons, trolley cars, the stamp of hoofs, and the shuffle of feet.

## CHAPTER XV

### Hennion and Shays

HENNION came to his office early that Saturday morning with his mind full of Macclesfield's bridge, and of the question of how to get Macclesfield interested in the Boulevard and the parks. He wondered how Macclesfield would take to the part of a municipal patriot. He thought that if he could only conquer some shining success, something marked, public, and celebrated, then, perhaps, his success might succeed with Camilla. At any rate, it paid to keep your eyes on the path where you seemed to be getting somewhere, and to follow that path, for so one travelled ahead and found that success attracted success by a sort of gravitation between them. All things came about to him who kept going. This was the native Hennion philosophy, of father and son,

much as it was a Champney trait to crave something to canonise. Neither Henry Champney nor Camilla could ever find peace without believing something to be better than they could prove it to be; neither the elder Hennion nor his son could ever find peace without the occupation of making something a little better than it had been.

Hennion leaned back in his office chair and stared out of the window. "I'll bet Miss Eunice is level-headed," he thought.

The half-begun plans and rough drawings for Macclesfield's bridge lay reproachful on his desk; a typewriter clicked in the anteroom; the clamour of trucks and trolley cars came in through the window, familiar noises, now sounding dull and far away to his ears. The maze of telephone wires and the window panes across the street glittered in the bright sunlight.

The sound of shambling feet outside approached the corridor door. The owner of the feet knocked, hesitated, and came in,

the pallid, unsubstantial, wavering Shays. His lips trembled, and his hand lingered on the door knob. Hennion swung around promptly in his chair.

"Look here, Shays! You don't get nourishment enough! You've burnt holes in your stomach till it won't hold any more than a fish net. Now, I'll tell you what you'd better do."

"Misser Hennion—Misser Hennion—I want you to see me through!"

He stretched out his hand with scattered fingers, appealingly.

"I want you—Misser Hennion—you see me through!"

"Oh, come in! Sit down."

Shays sat down, and Hennion looked him over.

"Had any breakfast?"

"I want you see me through!"

"What's the matter?"

Shays sat on the edge of the chair and told his story, waving a thin hand with high

blue veins. He hurried, stumbled, and came on through confusion to the end.

"Hicksy come about three o'clock," he said. "I didn't do nothing, and Tom he was asleep. Tha's right. We didn't want him, but he woke me up, and he says, 'I'm off, Jimmy,' like that. 'I broke jail,' he says, 'an' ye needn't wake Coglan,' he says, like that. Then I gets up and I falls down, plunk! like that, and Tom woke up. Then he goes arguin' with Hicksy, like they always done, and he says, 'You stay under Jimmy's bed,' he says, friendly, like that. 'You get off when there ain't nobody lookin',' he says. But Hicksy says, 'You're lookin' for the reward; you're goin' to sell me out,' he says. Then he says he's off, but Tom won't let him. Then they clinched, and Hicksy hit him with the chisel. Oh, my God! Misser Hennion! You see me through! He dropped, plunk! like that, plunk! Oh, my God! Misser Hennion! Jus' like that, plunk! He clipped him dead.

He did, too!" Shays paused and rubbed his lips.

"What next?"

"Then he says, 'Jimmy, that's the end of me,' like that, and he put that thing what he done it with in his pocket. He goes creepin', scroochin' out the door, like that, creepin', scroochin'. Oh, my God! Misser Hennion! I ain't goin' to stay there alone! Not me! I goes after him. And in Muscadine Street I see him, but it was dark, but I see him creepin', scroochin' along to the bridge; I see the chisel fall out and it clinked on the stones. Pretty soon I picks it up, and pretty soon I see Hicksy out on the bridge. Then he stopped. Then I knowed he'd jump. Then he jumped, plunk! jus' like that, plunk!"

He had the chisel in his hand, and showed it to Hennion.

"Let me see that."

Hennion swung away in his chair toward the light and examined the battered handle

with the straggling, ill-cut, and woe-begone face traced there.

He turned slowly and took a newspaper from his desk, rolled up the chisel in the newspaper, thrust it into a drawer, locked the drawer and turned back to the muttering Shays.

"I see. What next?"

"I says, 'Wha' for? Wha's that for?' Then I come to that place, and there ain't nothin' there. He got under quick, he did. He stayed there. He never come up. I watched. He never come up. Oh, my God! Misser Hennion, I ain't goin' to stay there! Folks was comin' on the bridge. I ain't goin' to stay there!"

"I see. What next?"

"Next?"

"Where'd you go then?"

"Misser Hennion! I went down under along the bridge, where there wa'n't anybody."

"What next?"

"Next?"

"Did you meet anyone? Say anything?"

"Wha' for? Wha's tha' for?"

"What did you do between then and now?"

"Me? Nothin'! I went to sleep by the bridge. Then I got breakfast at Riley's 'All Night.' Then I come here. I ain't said a word, excep' to Riley."

"What did you say to Riley?"

"Me! I says, 'Give me some coffee and an egg sandwich,' and Riley says, 'Ye're a dom little gutter pig, Jimmy,' and tha's every word."

"I see."

"Misser Hennion! You see me through!"

"All right. But you've got to mind this, or I get out from under you. You leave out Hicks' dropping that chisel, or your picking it up. He dropped nothing; you picked up nothing. Understand? He hit Coglan with something he had in his hand. Whatever it was, never mind. He put it in his

pocket and carried it off. You followed. You saw him jump off the bridge. That's all. Tell me the thing again, and leave that out. Begin where Hicks waked you."

"Me! Wha' for? Wha's tha' for?"

"I want you to get it fixed. Oh, never mind why! Fire away!"

While Shays repeated the story Hennion swung to and fro in his swing chair.

He had not seen the chisel these half-dozen years, but he knew the battered handle and the woful cherub face as the face of an old friend. He knew the niche in the tool chest where it belonged, and the spot where the tool chest stood in the room high over the mansards, from whose windows one looked through the upper branches of the trees out on the Muscadine. There in the summer the maple leaves would flicker in the sunlight, and in winter through bare branches one could see the river. There Milly used to sit on the floor with a white

apron on and a red ribbon, and chatter like a sweet-voiced canary bird.

He went over again the connection that had first flashed past his mind, between the chisel in the Champney tool chest and the one wrapped in a newspaper in his desk. Aidee visited Hicks Thursday night; Friday afternoon he was at the Champney house, where Miss Eunice had noticed emotion, conjectured a crisis, and was moved to give advice; Friday night Hicks broke jail and went to Shays, quarrelled with and killed Coglan, and went off to another world, leaving Shays with the chisel; Saturday morning comes Shays, along with the story that he was stumbling through now, anxiously shying around the forbidden part of it. Well, but —now as to Aidee—that was the second time he had been to Camilla for help, and Henry Champney had liked that sort of business no better than Hennion. It wouldn't do. As to Camilla, of course the "little maid" would be "game," but that gameness was a

bit too convenient for men like Aidee, who came along with a wheelbarrow full of celestial purposes in front and a cartload of tragedies behind. Hennion did not like the kind. A man ought to handle his own troubles and not drag women into them; that is to say, not Camilla. Why in thunder couldn't he keep his mouth shut, and buy a respectable burglar's outfit, like a gentleman, from a respectable hardware dealer! However, as to Miss Eunice's "crisis," it looked as if Aidee must have been confessing his criminal family, instead of the condition of his heart. Aidee was having a run of hard luck. Still, his criminal family was out of the way now, which did not seem a bad idea. Any chance of Camilla's name being mentioned would have to be smothered of course, which meant smothering the whole thing.

"Go on, Jimmy. Your style's picking up."

But, of course, Camilla now would take into her soul all the responsibilities in sight,

and brood and sadden over her fancies, and have nightmares. That wouldn't do either.

"Very good, Jimmy."

He must see Camilla, and be the first to tell her. Being inside the story now, he could give a healthy point of view from the inside.

"Plunk! jus' like that!" said Shays. "He went, plunk! I come up, and I looked, and he wa'n't there. Wa'n't nothin' there. He got under quick. He stayed, but I wa'n't goin' to stay. Wha' for? Wha's that for? Folks was comin' down Maple Street and I come away. I ain't see no more of him, but Tom, he's under the table, and there ain't no use in that, not him, nor I ain't goin' to stay there, not him."

"You wander, Jimmy. Who's 'him'?"

Miss Eunice was a wise woman, and according to her wisdom love was a sort of continuity of surprise, because women wanted it that way, and they held the lead-

ing ideas on the subject. Humph! Well—Camilla's joining Aidee that way was curious, and in fact, that "continuity of surprise" was all right. Aidee preached a kind of contempt for law; his doctrine always led him to side with the individual man against men organised, and against the structure of things; and he might have infected Camilla with his view of things, or it might be that view of things natural to women, their gift and function. What would Camilla do next? "God knows!" She would see that the "continuity of surprise" was all right. What on earth was Jimmy Shays talking about?

"Tom he says to me, 'Hicksy's a dangerous man, Jimmy,' he says, 'and I wouldn't trust him with me life or me property. Nor,' he says, 'I don't agree with his vilyanous opinions,' he says. That was Tom's word, 'vilyanous,' and it's true and it's proved, Misser Hennion, ain't it? Sure! Then he jumps into the river, plunk! like

that, Misser Hennion! I ain't done no harm."

Shays was harmless surely, and cobbled shoes besides for the benefit of society.

"Drop it, Jimmy. We'll go over to the police station."

## CHAPTER XVI

### Camilla Goes to the Assembly Ball

CAMILLA spent the morning in the store-room, staring through the window at the tree tops and glinting river. In the afternoon she went driving with her father. Henry Champney was garrulous on the subject of Dick's plans for the new railroad bridge and station, the three parks and moon-shaped boulevard.

"His conceptions impress me, Camilla. They do indeed! They do indeed!"

In Wabash Park Champney's imagination rose, and his periods lengthened. He foresaw lakes, lawns, and sinuous avenues.

"Nature judiciously governed, my dear, art properly directed, and the moral dignity of man ever the end in view. I foresee a great and famous city, these vast, green spaces, these fragrant gardens. Ha!"

He gazed benevolently at the scrubby pastures, and the creek where the small boys were shooting bullfrogs with rubber slings.

Camilla felt a certain vagueness of interest, and vaguely reproached herself. What was Alcott Aidee doing? Had his brother escaped? What was this dreadful brother like who would drag him away? But Alcott might come to the Champney house that afternoon. He might be there now. She must go back. He did not care for parks and boulevards and bridges. He loved the people, and sacrificed himself for the people, and he was going away, and did not know where it all would lead him. What did it matter whether or not one made a lawn in place of a pasture lot? But it must be wrong not to be interested in what Dick did and planned, or what her father said about it. She forced herself to answer and smile. Henry Champney was too busy unfolding his ideas to notice that her thoughts were absent. But Camilla noticed

how Dick's doings, sayings, and plans seemed to occupy her father's mind of late.

"A noble thought, a worthy ambition," Champney rumbled.

So they drove from the Park, Champney muttering and booming, Camilla wrapped in a crowd of uncertain fears and cravings. Through this cloud came the half-distinguished pain of feeling that her father could feel it possible to lean on anyone but herself, and find a wide passage through someone else than her to his fine victory over old age. It was through Dick, and of course, that made it more natural, but it hurt her.

She must find Aidee now. If his brother had escaped, it would be in the afternoon papers.

When they reached home she jumped out and ran up the steps, while her father drove on to the stable. She picked up the paper that lay on the porch, thrown in by the passing newsboy, who was skilful to deliver papers without getting off his bicycle. She

went upstairs, and did not look at the paper till she reached the store-room.

Henry Champney came into the library, where Miss Eunice was sitting. A half hour slipped by.

"That boy!" rumbled Henry Champney to Miss Eunice in his library; "that superlative procrastination! that acme of mental, moral, and physical ineptitude! Ha! Why doesn't he bring my paper? On my word, five o'clock! Five o'clock! Does he expect me to get up in the middle of the night to read it? Nonsense! I won't do it!"

Miss Eunice shook her head gloomily, implying that not much was to be expected of this generation. Richard, she said, had been in to see Camilla. He had been very unsatisfactory and distrait. He had said that he would come in again before teatime. No one else had called. She was of the opinion that Richard was worried. It was not proper for young people, when their elders were speaking, were giving im-

portant advice—it was not considerate or well-bred of them to look vague, to answer only that it was four o'clock, and they would come back to tea, when neither statement was important. The paper boy's rough manner of throwing the paper on the porch she had never approved of.

They were still on the subject when Camilla's step was heard in the hall. Instead of coming into the library she went swiftly out of the front door. Miss Eunice, at the window, dropped her knitting.

"Camilla is going out again!"

Mr. Champney rumbled inarticulately. Miss Eunice wondered if Camilla could have taken the paper upstairs. The young people of this generation were thoughtless, inconsiderate, and headstrong. But was it not injustice to Camilla to suspect her of carrying selfishly away her father's newspaper, a thing so important to his happiness before tea? Miss Eunice put aside her knitting and left the room, feeling uneasy.

She climbed the stairs and looked into Camilla's room, then climbed the second flight to the store-room. On the floor of the store-room, in front of the window, lay the paper, crushed and rumpled. Miss Eunice gasped, took it up, and sat down on the tool chest. How could Camilla have been so rude, so inconsiderate! The staring headlines of the front page proclaimed: "Hicks Escaped; a Murder and a Suicide. The Incidents of a Night." "Rumours of Important Cabinet Officer's Retirement." "Uprising in Southwestern Europe Expected. Rumours from Roumania." "Hennion and Macclesfield Are Agreed. Improvements projected in Port Argent." "John Murphy knew the Deceased Coglan." "Father Harra Orders Plain Funerals for his Flock. Two Carriages and a Hearse are his Limit."

None of these proclamations gave Miss Eunice any help in her amazement. No headline, except "Hennion and Maccles-

field," seemed to have any bearing on Camilla, and the column beneath that told nothing that Richard had not already told the family, about a railroad bridge and station, park improvements and so on; in which, it had been Miss Eunice's impression, Camilla had taken less interest than was becoming.

She sat on the tool chest, and stared at the front page of the crumpled newspaper, with a vague sense of distress. The air in the room seemed tense, the creases across the front of the paper like some wild and helpless handwriting, but what the interlinear writing meant, or whether it applied to "John Murphy" or "the deceased Coglan," or "Hennion and Macclesfield," or the "Cabinet officer," was beyond her. This sign of Miss Eunice's trouble was sure, that she sat a long time on the old tool chest, and no more than Camilla remembered that Henry Champney was in the library, forlorn of his afternoon paper.

When Hennion came to the Champney house again, it was a little before six. He saw through the door to the library Mr. Champney's white head bent down drowsily, where he sat in his chair.

Miss Eunice came down the stairs, agitated, mysterious, and beckoned him into the parlour. She showed him the crumpled newspaper.

"I don't understand Camilla's behaviour, Richard! She went out suddenly. I found the paper in the store-room. It is so unlike her! I don't understand, Richard!"

Hennion glanced at the front page, and stood thinking for a moment.

"Well — you'd better iron it out, Miss Eunice, before you take it to Mr. Champney. Milly will be back soon, but if you're worrying, you see, it might be just as well. He might be surprised."

He left the house, took a car up Franklin Street and got off at the corner by the Assembly Hall. The side door was ajar.

He went in and heard voices, but not from Aidee's study, the door of which stood open, its windows glimmering with the remaining daylight. The voices came from the distance, down the hallway, probably from the Assembly Hall. He recognised Aidee's voice, and turned, and went back to the street door, out of hearing of the words.

"It's the other man's innings," he thought ruefully. But, he thought too, that Milly was in trouble. His instinct to be in the neighbourhood when Milly was in trouble was too strong to be set aside. He leaned his shoulder against the side of the door, jammed his hands in his pockets, stood impassively, and meditated, and admired the mechanism of things.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Aidee—Camilla—Bennion

CAMILLA went up Bank Street, and took a car at the corner of Franklin Street. It carried her past the Court House Square, and so on to the little three-cornered park, where stood the Seton Avenue Assembly Hall, and opposite the Hall the block of grey houses with bay windows, of which the third from the corner was Mrs. Tillotson's.

That lady saw Camilla through the window and met her at the door.

"My dear! My dear! There is no one here! Positively! And my little drawing-room usually thronged! *Now*, we can have such a talk, such an *earnest* talk! We women must unite. The Assembly must take a *position*."

She sat by Camilla on the sofa and clasped her hand.

"I—I don't quite understand," said Camilla.

"*Surely*, my dear, the two most important questions before the Assembly are these: First, shall we, or shall we not, support Mr. Hennion? second, shall we, or shall we not, adopt a fixed form of service, more ornate and beautiful? Mr. Berry takes the affirmative of both, Mr. Ralbeck the negative. I am at present in the position of a reconciler. I have in particular devoted myself to the latter question. I have examined thoroughly the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. I have offered Mr. Aidee *all* my knowledge, *all* my literary experience. But he does not as yet take a *position!*"

Camilla promised a number of things, and asked for Aidee. Mrs. Tillotson thought he was at the Hall. He had not been to lunch. She was of the opinion that Mr. Aidee was distinctly avoiding her, knowing that she would insist on his taking a position, knowing her to be right in insisting.

Camilla escaped, and crossed the Avenue to the little side door that led into a hallway, out of which opened a room used by Aidee for a study. The door on the street was ajar. She had never entered that door before. She knew the windows of the study from without.

She entered the dusky hallway and knocked at the door of the study, but no one answered. She hesitated, and drew back, and then tried the knob. The door yielded and opened, but the room was empty.

In the growing dusk the corners of it were quite dark. It seemed bare, half-furnished—some books in a case, a matting, a flat littered table, a few chairs. She grasped at the sides of the open door, for the room seemed to darken and lighten alternately, and be so full of meaning as to be ghostly, seeing that no one sat at the littered table, or was even hiding, crouching in the darkened corners. The large square windows seemed to look inward rather than

outward, as if the centre of interest were within, and everything outside were meaningless. Yet the room was empty.

She gave a little moan of disappointment and helplessness. He must be hiding and suffering somewhere. She must protect him from the cruel, clattering noises and tongues outside! the dull, selfish, heartless people outside, to whom the prophet and martyr was forever coming and forever rejected, wounded by blind accidents, by people blind as accidents! So pitiful! so intolerable! So strange that the room should be empty of Aidee, and yet full of him! She could fancy him there, pacing the yellow matting, staring at the window, thinking, thinking.

She turned back from the half-lit room to the darkened hallway, and saw that another door opened out of it at the end furthest from the door on the street. Wherever it led, he might be there.

She opened it bravely, and saw only a

little corridor, crooking suddenly to the left and even darker than the outer hallway. She felt her way along the plastered wall to the corner, and beyond that in the darkness felt the panels of a final door. She opened it, half expecting a closet or cellar stair, and almost cried out, for the great, dim, glowing, glimmering space of the Assembly Hall was before her, with its windows now turning grey from the outer twilight; but its vaulted roof, its pillars and curved galleries of brown oak could be distinguished, its ranged tiers of seats, its wide, curved, carpeted platform, its high bulk of gilded organ pipes. She had seen it before only when the tiers of seats had been packed with people, when Aidee had filled the remaining space with his presence, his purposes, and his torrent of speech; when the organ had played before and after, ushering in and following the Preacher with its rolling music; when great thoughts and sounds, and multitudes of staring and listening people

had been there, where now it was so empty, so lonely and still. Silvery dim bars of light slanted from the windows downward to the centre of the hall, and the varnished backs of the seats shone in long concentric curves. Lines of darkness lay between them; deep darkness was under the galleries; shadows clustered in the vault overhead, shadows on the platform below the organ, where stood the Preacher's high-backed seat. Aidee had given the Hall what living meaning it had. Empty, it was still haunted by his voice, haunted by his phrases.

Camilla held her breath and stared from the little dark door, across the Hall, and saw Aidee standing by one of the gallery pillars. She started forward. Aidee came slowly from under the gallery to meet her.

"Camilla!"

"Oh! Why didn't you come?"

"Come?"

"To me. I thought you would!"

He stood silently before her, and seemed absorbed and constrained.

"When did you know?" she asked, and he answered mechanically, "This morning. I went down and saw the crowd under the window. I heard them talking. A newspaper reporter told me. Then I went to the bridge, but there was another crowd there, looking down at the water. So I came back."

They sat down in one of the seats. Camilla felt both excited and constrained. She was afraid to go on. During the dumb hour she had spent in the store-room, she had felt that life was plainly a ruinous affair, and that she was somehow touched by a horrible wickedness and stained forever. She imagined, shrinking, some disclosure and disgrace. She pictured Henry Champney's amazement and grief. And then it all had been swept from her mind by the thought of Aidee, suffering somewhere alone. But now that she had found him, she found him

reserved and quiet, and she seemed to stop on the edge of a gulf or crater, to peer over, to expect some red, rending explosion, but it was all still and dim there; and it stared up at her coldly and quietly.

"I came, because I thought I could help," she said. "I thought it would help us both."

"Are you troubled? You'd better let it go. It's the end of that story. I've fought it out now. I'm free of it."

"What do you mean?"

They stared closely in the dusk into each other's eyes. Then she dropped her head, and wept with her face in her hands.

"It's not your story," said Aidee.

"Yes, it is! It's mine!"

Then she raised her head, and he saw her wet eyes glisten in the dimness, and she said: "Teach me what it means." And a dull shock went through him threaded by a sharp pain, a sensation so penetrating as to resemble pain, and desirable enough to be

called happiness, and yet not like any pain or happiness in the remembered stretch of his concentrated and brooding life. That life, as he looked back on it, he saw starting from the old farmhouse on the plain, with its fallen fences and dry fields, the tired face of his mother in the house door, the small impish face of "Lolly" by his side. Next followed the big brick schoolhouse in the village, the schoolroom that he disliked, the books that he loved, the smoky chimney of his lamp, the pine table and the room where he studied; from which he would have to go presently down into the street and drag Lolly out of some raging battle with other boys, struggling and cursing, up to their room, where Lolly would turn on him in a moment with queer, twisted, affectionate smile, and clinging arms—"I ain't mad now, Al." Then he saw the press-room in St. Louis, he saw Lolly imprisoned and then suddenly gone. He saw the mines and the crumbling mountain slopes in

Nevada, the sheds, the dump cart, the spot where he had poured out first his long pent-up dreams to a rugged, astonished audience, and where that new passion of speech had come to him, that had seemed to fill the craving void in his heart; the spot where he had met the circuit-riding bishop and T. M. Secor. Then came his early success in Port Argent and the organisation of the Assembly; then the attack on Wood, and the growing sense of futility, in that while many listened and praised, little happened and little came of their listening or approval. "They take me for an actor, and the Assembly for a comedy," he had thought bitterly, and he had written "The Inner Republic," and the book that had brought to him Camilla Champney, eager and pure-eyed, and asking, "What does it mean? It is my story too!"

What did it mean? Lolly lay dead in the ooze of the Muscadine and Port Argent was come to be a horror. He seemed so plainly

to have failed, so drearily was Lolly dead, and all the fire in his own soul dead too, gone out in cinders, and his theory of life cracked like a hollow nutshell. He would go back to the mines, or to the slums and shops, and live again with the sweating hordes, among whom the grim secret of life lay, if anywhere; and when next he preached, he would preach the bitterest fact loudest. No, rather, if life is hopeless let us dig in the earth and say nothing. But Camilla! What of Camilla? And what did she mean? Her story too! He began to speak slowly, but presently grew rapid and eager.

"How can I explain? I never knew my fellow men, nor cared for them. They were no brothers of mine. I had but one. I never loved another human being, not these twenty years, but I had the kin instinct like hunger. Allen and I were rooted together. I thought I was a prophet, who was no more than a savage. Men are brothers by blood or interest, but for the rest they fight the old

war that began before the earth had a decent crust to cover its chaos. Brotherhood of wildcats!"

"Oh, no! no!" she cried.

"For your sake, no, Camilla! Oh, through you I could hope again! You will save me, I will cut the past out and bury it, I will begin again. I will count this place with the dead and leave it forever. I need you. Come with me, my wife and hope and guide. Camilla, help me!"

"No, no!"

His sharp, strained voice frightened her. His eyes glittered and his face was white below his black hair. His intensity frightened her. The future he pointed to threatened her like an overhanging cloud, the struggle in her own heart frightened her.

"You said the story was yours. Camilla, tell me so again! We'll blot it out. I will forget! I need you! Come away from this ghastly city!"

Now she saw her father in his library,

his white head bent. He was waiting and listening for her footsteps; and Dick seemed to be standing over him, listening for her to come; and Aunt Eunice, near by, was listening.

"I can't!" she cried. "I can't!"

"You must! Camilla! We will go away. It would be possible with you. I'll find a truth yet that doesn't lead to hell. I'll be a leader yet. Camilla, look at me!"

She lifted her face and turned slowly toward him, and a voice spoke out in the distant, dark doorway, saying, "Milly!"—and then hesitated, and Hennion came out.

"I heard you crying," he said quietly. "I didn't seem to be able to stand that."

"Dick! Take care of me!" she cried, and ran to him, and put her face against his arm. The two men looked at each other for a moment.

Aidee said, "I'm answered."

"I think you gave me a close call," said Hennion, and drew Camilla past him into

the passage, and followed her a few steps. Then he turned back, thinking:

"A fanatic is a term that mostly defines the definer, instead of the person meant to be defined. Sometimes it defines the man who uses it, as dense."

At any rate Aidee was a force and had a direction, and force ought not to be wasted that way, for the credit of dynamics. So Hennion justified himself, and then confused his motive by thinking, "It's hardly a square game besides." He stepped from the door into the dim Hall again, and said slowly:

"By the way, I saw Hicks last one night, some two weeks ago, and he told me who he was. He intended, I believe, to leave a message for you. Maybe he mentioned it to you. I think he told no one else who he was."

Hennion paused. Aidee made no motion nor sound, but stood stiffly resistant.

"Well, you see, this morning, Jimmy Shays, the shoemaker, brought me that

chisel. It seems Hicks used it last on Coglan, and then left it behind him, which was rather careless. Well, I knew the tool. The fact is, it was mine. Strikes me you might as well have gone somewhere else for your hardware."

Still no sound.

"However, being mine, I took the liberty of pitching it into the river, where it really belonged, and swore Jimmy into a state of collapsed secrecy. Consequently, I'm in collusion. Consequently, I'm mentioning this to you in order to clean up the ground between us. It makes no great difference. That's all right. I only wanted to point out that you're clear of the mess. Now, there's a job for you in Port Argent. I think you can fill the place rather better—better than anyone else. Will you stay?"

"No."

"Oh! But I've heard it said, political power was safe in the hands of those who had to make a sacrifice in order to accept it."

"I won't make it."

"It turns out a hypocritical sacrifice for me, you know. I'm on the highroad to corruption. You might stay in Port Argent and keep me honest. Will you?"

"No."

"All right. Good-night."

The little side streets between Seton Avenue and Maple Street were shaded by young maples, the street lamps frequent, and now being lit. Hennion and Camilla walked slowly. She shivered once or twice, and half sobbed, and clung to him. They talked very little at first.

"Milly," he said at last, "of course, you know, I'm backing you, anyway. You shall do as you like."

"I know, Dick. You're good. You're very good to me."

"Well—maybe I'm wrong—I've been that before—but it looks to me in this way, that, after all, most impossible things are

possible somehow, or somehow else, and it's better to go straight at the steep places. It stirs your blood to see how steep they are. I don't know altogether—I don't ask—but if you see anything that looks steep ahead, why, perhaps it is, perhaps it is—but then, what of it? And that's the moral I've been hedging around to, Milly."

After a silence she asked, "How did you know I was there?"

"I thought it likely."

He told her of his talk with Hicks in the cell, and how Shays, the shoemaker, had come to him that morning, but he omitted the fact that the chisel had been "used on Coglan." Passing that point, he went on, comfortably comforting.

"You know, people don't own all the miscellaneous consequences of what they do. For instance, I knew Coglan. He was a blackguard and loafer, and generally drunk, and his death was rather a judicious selection. Hicks was a curious man. Maybe he

wasn't quite sane. He jumped into the river on his own notion, to the happy relief of the public, which might have had scruples about hanging him. Still, you must see that as you didn't arrange all these social benefits, they'll have to be credited to your good luck, if they're credited at all. Aidee helped him to break jail, which was natural enough. It's a debatable moral maybe, if anyone wants to debate it, but who wants to? I'm no casuist, anyway. He shouldn't have come to you. But since he did, why, of course you'd do something of the kind, same as the wind blows. I know you, Milly. Is it your part in it that troubles you? You'd better take my judgment on it."

"What is it?" she said, half audibly.

"My judgment? Only that I want you for myself."

He went on quietly after a pause: "There are objections to interfering with the law, if your conscience means that. Those who try it, I think, don't often know what

they're doing. If they do it theoretically, they're staking a small experience against a big one. The chances of being right are mainly against them. Aren't they? It looks so. Your getting mixed with that kind of thing or people, is—would be, of course, rather hard on us, on Mr. Champney and me. But your nerve was good. Is that what you want my judgment on?"

They turned up the path to the Champney house.

"You knew all about it!" she said hurriedly. "But you don't understand. It was because I thought him so great and noble, and I do! I do! Oh, he is! But I'm not brave at all. No, you don't know! He asked me to help, and it was so dark and painful, what he meant to do before he came again. It frightened me. He asked me to marry him, and break off everything here, and I was afraid! I'm a coward! I wouldn't do it because I was afraid. I'm a coward."

"Did, did he?" said Hennion comfortably. "That was good nerve, too."

"You don't understand," she said with a small sob, and then another.

"Maybe not. But I think you had other reasons."

They looked in through the tall library window, and saw Henry Champney sitting alone by his table, the gas jet flaring over him, and his white head dropped over on his hand. Hennion went on: "There's some of this business that it doesn't suit me to argue about or admit. But it occurs to me that"—pointing toward the window—"that may have been a reason."

"You do understand that," she said, and they went in together.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### T. M. Secor—Dennion—Camilla

PORT ARGENT had not reached such a stage of civic life that its wealthy citizens went out into the neighbouring country by reason of warm weather. Besides, the neighbouring country is flat, and the summer heats seem to lie on it level and undisturbed. There straight roads meet at right angles, one cornfield is like another, and one stumpy pasture differs little from the next. It is fertile, and looks democratic, not to say socialistic, in its monotonous similarity, but it does not look like a landscape apt to draw out to it the civilian, as the hill country draws out its civilians, with the thirst of the hill people for their falling brooks and stormy mountains, the wood thrushes and the columbine. An "observer of decades" might have remarked that Herbert Avenue

was the pleasantest spot he had seen within a hundred miles of Port Argent, and that the civic life seemed to be peculiarly victorious at that point. There was a village air about the Avenue, only on a statelier scale, but with the same space and greenness and quiet. One of the largest houses was T. M. Secor's.

Secor sat on his broad verandah in the early twilight. He stirred heavily in his chair, and stretched out a great hand thick and hard, as Hennion came up the steps.

"Glad to see you, sonny," Secor said. "Stick up your feet and have a drink."

"Just come from Nevada?"

"One hour and one-half ago, during the which time Billy Macclesfield's been here, greasy with some new virtues. I take it you had something to do with greasing him. Next came Ted, who said he's going to get married. Next came Aidee with a melodious melodrama of his own, and said he

was going to quit town. Why, things are humming here! How you feeling, sonny?"

A huge, hairy, iron-grey, talkative man, with a voice like an amiable bison, was T. M. Secor.

He continued: "Hold on! Why, Aidee said you knew about that screed of his. I gathered you got it by a sort of fortuitous congregation of atoms? I gathered that there brother of Aidee's was, by the nature of him, a sort of fortuitous atom."

"About that."

"Just so! Well—you ain't got a melodious melodrama too?"

"No," said Hennion. "I want to take up the conversation you had with Macclesfield."

"Oh, you do!"

"I'm not feeling greasy with virtue myself, you know."

"Oh, you ain't!"—Secor was silent for some moments.

"I guess I'm on to you, sonny," he said at last. "I'll tell you my mind about it. I think you handled Macclesfield all right, and that's a very good job, and you may be solid now with the gang, for aught I know, but my idea is, it 'll be only a question of time before you get bucked off. I'd give you a year, maybe two."

"I think so."

"You figure on two years?"

"Next election. Tait's out with me now, and he'll get a knife in when he can. Beckett, Freiburger, and Tuttle will probably be on edge before next spring. That's too soon. Now—if I can get the parks and Boulevard done, I'm willing to call off without a row. I want the Manual Training School too. But Tuttle's going to get some rake off out of that. Can't help it. Anyway Tuttle will see it's a good enough job. I don't mind Cam, and John Murphy's indecent, but reasonable. But Freiburger's going to be a holy terror. I don't see that

I can run with that crowd, and I don't see how it can be altered much at present. If I split it they'll lose the election. Now—I think it 'll split of itself, and I'd be of more use without the responsibility of having split it. I think so. Anyhow, I'm going to have something to show people for my innings."

"Just so."

After another silence Secor said: "What was Wood's idea? D'you know?"

"He thought it would split of itself."

"Think so? Well, I've a notion he had a soft side to him, and you'd got on it. Well—I don' know. Seemed to me that way. What then?"

"Oh, I'll go out. I don't want it anyway. I want my father's job. Maybe I'm a bit of a Puritan, Secor, and maybe not, but when the heelers get restless to explosion, and the Reformers grimmer around the mouth because the city isn't rosy and polite, and my general utility's gone, I expect to thank God,

and go back to pile-driving exclusive. But I want time."

"Just so. I can keep Beckett and Tuttle from being too soon, maybe. That what you want of me?"

"Yes."

"You say 'Wood's machine,'" Hennion went on after a while. "It's a poor metaphor, 'machine politics,' 'machine organisation.' Why, being an engineer, I ought to know a machine when I see one. I've analysed Wood's organisation, and I tell you you can't apply one bottom principle of dynamics to it to fit. The machinery is full of ghosts."

The two smoked a while, and Hennion said: "How about Aidee?"

"Ho! I don't see why he won't stay in Port Argent."

"He won't. I asked him."

"You don't say so! Why, there you are! I had a notion you two might team it together, come along time enough."

"It won't work."

"Ho! Well! I dare say. Maybe you know why." Another silence. Secor said at last:

"Dick, I got only one real notion in business and philanthropy. I bank on it in both trades. I keep gunning for men with coal in their engines and a disposition to burn it, and go on till they bust up into scrap iron, and when I find one, I give him a show. If I think he's got the instinct to follow his nose like a setter pup, and not get nervous and climb telegraph poles, I give him a show. Well—Aidee had the coal and the disposition, and he burnt it all right, and I gave him his show. Didn't I? He's got the idea now that he's run himself into the ditch and turned scrap iron. Humph! Well! He lost his nerve anyway. Why, Hicks is dead, and Wood's dead, and they can scrap it out in hell between 'em, can't they? What business he got to lose his nerve? He used to have an idea God Almighty was in

politics, and no quitter, and meant to have a shy at business. Interesting idea, that. Ho! He never proved it. What the blazes he want to quit for now? Well! I was going to say, I'm gambling on you now for a setter pup, sonny, without believing you can ride Wood's machine. I'll give you a show, when you're good and through with that. I've been buying Chickering R. R. stock. Want some of it? Yes, sir, I'm going to own that line inside a year, and give you a job there that 'll make you grunt to reach around it. Ho! Ted says he's going to take John Keys' girl and go to Nevada. Ain't so foolish as you'd expect of him. Sounds cheerful. Ted's a drooling damn fool all right, but he's no quitter. I hear you're going to marry Champney's daughter?"

"I will if I can."

"You don't say! Ain't any better off'n that? Humph! Well, Henry Champney's petered out, but then he's pretty old now.

He could talk tall in his time, near as good as Aidee, but more windy. Aidee had a better outfit of brains, but Champney was a fine figure of a man, and burnt coal all right. Why, I met my wife on a lake steamer, and married her when I got to Port Argent with twenty-one dollars and fifty cents in my pocket, and she never understood how it happened — claimed she didn't, anyhow—and that afternoon I heard Henry Champney make a speech from the Court House steps that sounded like he was President of the Board of Prophets, and I bet a man twenty dollars Champney was prophesying all right, and lost it, I did. I began housekeeping on a dollar and a half. Yes, sir. 'Will if you can!' Ho! Well, why can't you?"

The big talkative man wandered off into mellow reminiscence, and Hennion presently took his leave.

He came to the Champney house and was about to ring the bell, but Camilla spoke

from the corner of the porch, where she sat hidden in the black shadows of the vines.

"Do you want me, Dick?"

"Yes."

From the outside, where the nervous electric light and the placid moonlight mingled, little gimlets of light bored through, insisted and arrived, through the matting of vine leaves that hid the porch, and made little specks of light within, impertinent and curious, little specks on the wall, little specks on the floor.

"Want you!" Hennion said. "I always want you."

He bent over till her breath was warm on his face.

"How can you be so near me, and so far away? Did you think I loved you as a habit? You're God's crown of glory that he sent me, but it won't stay still on my head. Do you remember when you used to sit on the floor upstairs in a white dress, with a red ribbon on it somewhere? Don't remem-

ber the red ribbon? You used to cut faces on shingles, with dismal expressions and hard-luck features, and you thought they were the beautifullest things, and got very hot because I didn't. But I thought that you were the beautifullest girl with the red ribbon. I did so."

"I didn't know that."

"I know. I'm a poor, tongue-tied lover, Milly. I ought to fling myself loose on the subject, and describe the gorgeous state of my heart, and lie like a seaman ashore, if I had the gift of my calling. I'm no poet or dreamer of dreams. I'm after realities. I don't expect to be a burning and shining light to other people or reform anybody whatever, but I expect to please one girl, if she'll let me try. Real things! What do you suppose they are? One time I was born, and now I love you, and sometime I'll die, and God knows what then. Are those realities? Can you see the river there, where the moonlight is on it? It

runs down to the lake, and the force that draws it down is as real as the river itself. Love is a real thing, more real than hands and feet. It pulls like gravitation and drives like steam. When you came to me there at the Hall, what was it brought you? An instinct? You asked me to take care of you. I had an instinct that was what I was made for. I thought it was all safe then, and I felt like the eleventh commandment and loved mine enemy for a brother. I can't do anything without you! I've staked my hopes on you, so far as I can see them. I've come to the end of my rope, and there's something between us yet, but you must cross it. I can't cross it."

From where Hennion sat he could look past the porch pillar, to the spot at the street corner directly under the electric light. The street was deserted except for some solitary walker, pacing the sidewalk slowly past the house, and hidden from Hennion by the porch vines. Now he had turned

and was coming back again slowly to the corner, and now Hennion glanced out beyond the pillar and saw Aidee standing under the electric light. Then Aidee was again hidden by the porch vines, and again his slow footsteps passed on the sidewalk some hundreds of feet from the porch.

"Can I cross it?" Camilla's voice sounded older, not buoyant, but tired and humble, and sinking lower and lower as she went on. "Can I? If love were the same as faith! There's no one else I can believe in, in this way, as I do in you, dear. I'm so sure, but I thought—but can I come? If you tell me truly that I can come—I will believe what you tell me."

Hennion wondered if Aidee had come to take his last look at the house, or were debating in his mind whether or not he should enter. He turned on Camilla, and thrust his arm beneath her, and drew her to him sharply. He expected a remonstrance, but none came; only a small sigh whose mean-

ing was as imponderable as the scent of the little white flowers that grew on the porch vines; and her hand lay still on one of his shoulders, and her head with its thick hair on the other.

"You have come!" he said.

Another small sigh, a moment's weighing of the statement.

"Yes. I have."

Aidee passed under the electric light once more, and looked his last on the Champney windows, unnoticed now from the Champney porch, unaware that there was anyone to notice him in the shadow of the deep porch vines, with their small white glimmering blossoms. He quickened his pace and went his way up Bank Street.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Conclusion

HENNION and Camilla were married in the fall when the maple leaves were turning yellow and red. It may be that Camilla thought of herself as one consenting with humility to enter a quiet gateway, the shelter of a garden whose walks and borders she knew; and it may be that she was mistaken and found it a strange garden with many an herb of grace, and many an old-fashioned perennial as fairly embroidered as any that grow in Arcadia; for when one has found that the birth of one of the common flowers and hardy perennials comes as wonderfully out of the deeps as the birth of a new day, it may be that one understands heaven even better than when floating in Arcadia among its morning islands.

She could never truly have a working share

in Dick's working life. She could sympathise with its efforts and achievements, but never walk even with him along that road. He would come to her tired, asking for home and rest, but never sick of soul, asking for healing, nor troubled and confused, asking for help. It was not his nature. One must take the measure of one's destiny and find happiness therein. After all, when that is found, it is found to be a quite measureless thing; and therefore the place where it is found must be a spacious place after all, a high-roofed and wide-walled habitation.

Who is so rich in happiness as to have any to throw away? We are beggars rather than choosers in that commodity. And Time, who is represented with his hour-glass for measuring, his scythe for destruction, his forelock for the grasp of the vigilant, except for his title of Father Time, has been given no symbol definitely pointing to that kindness of his as of a good shepherd, that medicinal touch as of a wise physician,

that curious untangling of tangled skeins as of a patient weaver, that solution of improbable equations as of a profound algebraist. But yet a little while, and let the winds freshen the air and the waters go their clean rounds again, and lo! he has shepherded us home from the desert, and comforted us in new garments, and turned our minus into plus by a judicious shifting across the equation. Shall we not give him his crook, his medicine case and license to practise, his loom, his stylus and tablets, and by oracle declare him "the Wisest," and build him a temple, and consult his auspices, and be no more petulant if he nurtures other seeds than those of our planting, the slow, old-fashioned, silent gardener? We know no oracle but Time, yet we are always harking after another. He is a fluent, dusky, imperturbable person, resembling the Muscadine River. He goes on forever, and yet remains. His answers are Delphic and ambiguous. Alas! he tends to drown enthu-

siasm. Who is the wisest? "The one who knows that he knows nothing," quoth your cynic oracle. What is justice? "A solemn lady, but with so bandaged eyes that she cannot see the impish capers of her scales." What is happiness? As to that he answers more kindly. "In the main," he says, "happiness is a hardy perennial."

The "observer of decades," who came to Port Argent some years later, found it proud of its parks, its boulevard, and railroad stations, its new court house, and jail, and manual training school; proud of its rapid growth, and indignant at the inadequacy of the national census. He was shown the new streets, and driven through suburbs where lately pasture and cornfields had been. He found Port Argent still in the main electric, ungainly, and full of growing pains, its problem of municipal government still inaccurately solved, the system not so satisfactory a structure as the railroad bridge below the boathouses, built by Dick Hennion for the

North Shore Railroad. In shop and street and office the tide of its life was pouring on, and its citizens held singular language. Its sparrows were twittering in the maples, bustling, quarrelling, yet not permanently interested in either the sins or the wrongs of their neighbours, but going tolerantly to sleep at night. Here and there a bluebird was singing apart its plaintive, unfinished "Lulu-lu."

He inquired of one of Port Argent's citizens for news, and heard that the "Independent Reformers" had won an election sometime back; that they were out again now, and inclined to be vituperative among themselves; that Port Argent was again led by Marve Wood's ring, which was not such a distressing ring as it might be. Hennion was not in it now. No, but he was suspected of carrying weight still in the party councils, which perhaps accounted for the "ring's" not being so distressing as it might be.

"He did more than he talked about,"

said the garrulous citizen. "But speaking of talkers, there was a man here once named Aidee. You've heard of him. He's getting celebrated. Well, I'm a business man, and stick to my times. But I read Aidee's books. It's a good thing to do that much."

The observer of decades left the garrulous citizen, and went down Lower Bank Street. He noted the shapeless, indifferent mass and contour of the buildings on the river-front, the litter of the wharves, the lounging black barges beside them, the rumble of traffic on the bridge and in distant streets, the dusky, gliding river lapping the stone piers and wooden piles, and going on forever while men come and go. He thought how the stone piers would sometime waste and fall, and the Muscadine would still go on, turbid and unperturbed.

"Adaptability seems the great test of permanence," he thought. "Whatever is rigid is fragile."

In front of the Champney house he

stopped and looked up past the lawn and saw old Henry Champney, sitting in a wicker chair that was planted on the gravel walk. He was leaning forward, his chin on his cane, and gazing absorbed at his two grandchildren at his feet, a brown-haired child and a dark-haired baby. They were digging holes in the gravel with iron spoons.

What with the street, the railway, and the river, it might almost be said that from the Champney lawns one watched the world go by, clattering, rolling, puffing, travelling these its three concurrent highways. But Henry Champney seemed to take no interest now in this world's triple highways, nor to hear their clamour, but only cared now to watch the dark-haired baby, and listen to the little cooing voices.

THE END

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